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ABSTRACT

Our elementary secondary schools have hidden curricula which teach passivity, resistance to change, inflexibility, and submissive behavior in a world which is moving toward faster changes and heightened personal individuality. Class control with the teacher feeding information to the students like data to a computer can no longer be accepted as the governing principle of education. The child learns through interacting with the world; the teacher must see to it that the child has access to the experiences the child needs. Currently, nature is seen as something to improve upon and be separate from. Although this world has held a variety of values toward nature, we are now at a point where most of the experiences of children come from a manmade source. Outdoor education can be used to teach art, mathematics, physics, sociology, etc., with just a slight change of perspective. There are many settings in which the teacher can use direct experience as the child's source of learning. Adventure education, summer camp, and environmental education can provide learning as well as heightened self-image/respect and responsibility. Within the main body of the discussion are examples and activities associated with successful outdoor programs. Following the main discussion is a journal of the author's experience directing an outdoor education program. (PM)

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PACIFIC OAKS COLLEGE

Pasadena, California

NATURE AND EDUCATION:
LEARNING FROM THE WORLD AROUND US

A Project Submitted in Partial

Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Human Development

by

Cathy Donckers

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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PREFACE

So much has been written on education it boggles my mind--a tangled mass of ideas, all of which seem to make sense on their own, but as of yet, don't fit together and have any unity. In writing this, I hope to clarify and see the links between these ideas, to create a base on which to build the last part of this paper, and to encourage others to think on our children and their education.

The words of Earl C. Kelley strike a chord in me: "(Some) have been bothered by the lack of references or documentation. But I can hardly depend for proof on the mere fact that someone else has said it before me." (1947, p. xi) Likewise, the fact that it is so under a certain set of conditions at a certain time cannot be taken as proof. The quotations and references throughout this paper were selected for their eloquence or different perspective but not proof, lest we find we've closed ourselves in "circles of certainty" (Freire, 1970, p. 23) and made our own truth.

CHAPTER I

THOUGHTS ON EDUCATION

Why Educate?

The experts agree on very little: what the student should learn, how the teacher should teach, what the structure of the school should be, even if there should be schools at all. Yet there seems to be a fundamental question that they all ask, that needs to be asked, as the very first step. And that is, Why educate? What is the purpose of it all? This must remain a visible, guiding force or we find ourselves all entwined in the methods, techniques, and structures, that eventually take over most of our energy and focus, and can indeed become goals in and of themselves. When this does happen, we are at a loss to justify the whole process of education, for any long-term meaning and purpose has been overshadowed by short-term objectives and procedures.

So, why do we educate? Why do we spend so much time and energy on this process? Simply, to help our children: to give them the start they need to become all they can be, to be able to "make it" in our world, to understand what living is, to find " the good life."

> Greeting his pupils, the master asked:
> What would you learn of me?

> And the reply came:
> How shall we care for our bodies?
> How shall we rear our children?
> How shall we work together?
> How shall we live with our fellow man?
> How shall we play?
> For what ends shall we live?
> And the teacher pondered these words, and sorrow was in his heart, for his own learning touched not these things.
>
> (Chapman & Counts, flyleaf)

Is our present day educational system helping children toward these goals?

Is this what the schools today are doing? Are they helping them become all they can be? Are they guiding them in their own discoveries of "the good life," or are they telling them what it is? Are they, indeed, helping our children, or, as many educators contend, is the reverse more often the case? We need to look past the years of high school and the years of college, and see what becomes of our students after that. The question is not how well did they do in school, but how well did they learn how to learn. How eager are they to continue what's begun in school, or are they relieved to close the textbooks, take the finals, get their diplomas so they can get started with what's really important, what life's all about? Doesn't that seem like a real waste of life-years? Doesn't it hurt just to think about it? When they've finished school, will they be in any shape to question what's really important for them, to recognize it, and to know how to go about arriving there?

What Have We Been Doing?

What is going on in our schools, and what are our children learning? Some basic assumptions that lay the framework for our schools include that the child needs to acquire the knowledge of the past, that this is inherently good for him, that the best place for this to happen is in schools, by teachers who relay the necessary information to him. All children need to learn the same things, best determined by experts in the field, to prepare them for later life. The important thing in school is to get good grades: that is, to know the right answers at the right times, and to know more of them than anyone else.

What is all this teaching the child about life? What is the hidden message she receives, the message that becomes a part of her throughout her school years and well after? Children learn that knowledge is something that comes from out there, something you wait for someone to give to you, something you accept and memorize, something to be acquired and accumulated, like money in the bank, though its use later on is sometimes more difficult to imagine.

Children learn that their own interests are valid only to the point with which they coincide with the plan, the curriculum. Otherwise, these interests don't lead to real learning. They also learn that doing things they don't like or don't want to do is good for them. Could this be connected with why so many continue later on with jobs that

don't really appeal to them, because they've come to believe that these particular jobs are good for them?

They learn that schools have the market on education. Education isn't valid or real unless it comes from the schools. Schools haven't always held the prestige of being the sole specialists in education. They had to create the demand (Illich, p. 86), and still continue to do so. Even as I'm writing this, an advertisement is on the radio for low-interest loans at a local bank: "We know how important an education is, and a quality education is something your child can't afford to be without." The clear message is buy, consume--this is something you need. A little more subtle is an indoctrination into a world where institutions first define, then meet "our needs." In our present educational system, the child comes to see someone else, the teacher, as all-knowing, or knowing what's best. This source of knowledge is not someone to interact with, but to react to.

Children learn that what's good for one, is good for all. They learn that they must prepare for life, as if what they're doing now isn't living; it's merely getting them ready for "the real thing." They learn they must always be preparing for something--the next chapter, test, grade, to look ahead, not around. It is rarely enough to be in the here and how.

Children learn to depend on someone else to determine

what they need to know. In doing so, others also determine what they don't learn. And this is taken as the way things should be. We "learn" the body of knowledge that a select few of the dominating force in the culture have deemed important and nothing else. In fact, the rest is often kept strangely quiet.

Children learn that there is a right and a wrong answer for everything, and how you get it isn't what's important; it's the answer itself. They learn how important it is to develop strategies to get the right answers: to pick up on subtle cues from the teacher, often to manipulate the teacher to give away some clues, to be aware of patterns the teacher might have, in essence, to know more about the teacher than he might know himself (Holt, 1964) They also learn the importance of strategies that help them save face for those times when their answers are wrong. In addition to right answers, there's a right way to teach, and that's like the teacher. Here again, the object becomes figuring out how to please someone else.

These are all things a child may learn from the stated objectives of our educational system and the recognized assumptions on which they are built. However, there's learning going on even under this surface, learning from the structure of the school itself. This hidden curriculum is not as obvious at first, but it may be the learning in school that the child really never forgets.

The daily routine of the child includes entering the school at a specified time, taking her seat in a specific desk, waiting for the first bell to ring to signal the time to learn a subject. When the allotted time is up, the bell rings again, and it's time to change to another subject. During the day the child is expected to stay quiet unless called on, to remain at his desk unless excused, pay constant attention to the lesson, and do his work quickly and quietly by himself and in the approved style. What does the child internalize from this process? What messages does she pick up about herself and the world around her? She probably comes to believe that the world is a scheduled place, that time is exact, a unit for measuring, for separating, for limiting. How often in our own lives have we seen the residuals of the clock-structured schooling of our childhood? How often have we made out time schedules in order to accomplish our ends efficiently? And if we failed to subconsciously master this skill when young, there are numerous courses and books currently available on time management. How often have you glanced nervously at your watch as vital things remain undone? In fact, how important is your watch? Have you ever tried a day, a week without it? Do you feel anxiety or relief? Granted, schools are just one institution among many in our precision/time-oriented society, but this orientation toward time was surely ingrained in us through years of exposure in school. How many times have

you heard, "I work better when I have a deadline"? Often, the effect is that the pleasure or enjoyment or even the experience of what we're doing becomes secondary to the time schedules we impose. We move from the now, from being, to a future-oriented, a goal-oriented state. We may experience the success of sticking to our schedule, but what can we say about the process, the actual "doing," other than we did it "on time?"

Hand in hand with the structure of time, the child picks up on the supremacy of efficiency. The world must strive to be efficient; he himself must become efficient. Get the most for the least. The accepted way to be efficient is to be logical, to think in linear fashion, to be exact, to the point. To practice efficiency one must standardize, minimize, or ignore differences, strive for uniformity. Everything can, and should, be measured, then compared and ranked. Always strive for the top, even if you don't take time to consider the top of what.

If knowledge is divided into subjects, and it corresponds with the world and prepares us for life, then both the world and the act of living become segmented, categorized. In the world around us, we tend to focus on the similarities within categories, and the differences between them. Not only can this discourage seeing the interdependence and connections between things on this earth, but also can isolate some people from others, or from parts of their world. We

may compartmentalize our lives, according to actions, relationships, time periods--and fail to see any sense of unity or wholeness.

If you believe that people learn through what they do, consider what the child actually does in school. She sits, obeys, is quiet, behaves, repeats. She often learns that the ones who get the best grades, who succeed in school, are submissive to the teacher. She learns that this includes accepting things as they are, not questioning and causing trouble. It's rather interesting that through this hidden design the school perpetrates both itself as an institution and other institutions in society. Those who do best in school and therefore have a better chance at positions of power and influence are those who have learned it's best to leave things as they are, whereas those who rebel against the system are labeled as failures, deviants, or delinquents, affecting their self-image, the light in which they see themselves, and consequently their potential effect as change-agents. (Rich, 1975)

What do children learn from the fact that talking to friends during class is now allowed? That there's a time and a place to be social, and what's more important is the work at hand. Is it any wonder that bureaucracies are known for their impersonality and lack of human touch when we learn so early to separate work from being human? In order to make it in school, the child quickly learns "how to be

alone in a crowd." (Rich, 1975, p. 38) He also learns that work is something to be done on your own, without the help or company of friends. And then we wonder why people can't work together. When have they had the opportunity or guidance to develop those skills? In fact, the exact opposite is stressed. In order to succeed, you have to do, and be, better than anyone else. If you help them, you'll only risk your own chances for success. Stories of the dog-eat-dog competitiveness of some college students are unfortunately neither exaggerated nor untrue.

And what does the child learn from her relationship with the teacher? The teacher is the one who provides the goals, who defines the rules, who names the game, and the child is bound to follow along to pay the consequences. Not only is the teacher all-knowing, but all-powerful. It's a special relationship of domination/subordination. Simply, when people who have the knowledge and do the acting are subjects, those who are known and acted upon become objects. (Freire, 1970) A common teacher's goal is to mold students to fit into society, and in the process, the children are tested, categorized, and ranked. Funny that this manipulation should have any effect on children. However, the teachers themselves are not immune from manipulation. Given that the acquisition of knowlege is of prime importance, the teachers become merely the means to an end. This is often felt as control from above--the goals, objectives, planned

curriculum all handed down from a source of higher knowledge. As Clark Moustakas puts it:

> As it now stands the school is a powerful reinforcer of alienation in modern society. The teacher is alienated in himself; he does not exist as a real person in the classroom; he plays a role; he fulfills duties and follows instructions. The teacher is alienated from his subject matter; it is external to his real world of feelings . . . it is outside himself. The teacher is also alienated from the child; the child is perceived in categories and evaluative terms, slow or fast, . . . average or retarded . . . Where the teacher is alienated from himself, from the subject matter and from his pupils, gradually but definitely, the teacher becomes an object among objects, a thing among things.
>
> (Kneller, 1971, p. 83)

And what are the motivating forces that sustain such a system? As recognized by many, one of the prime components is fear. Children fear the teachers, teachers fear the administrators and the children (so many to control!), parents fear the teachers... Schools are fear-provoking, anxiety-creating environments for many, and perhaps no one feels this as strongly as the child. I found no author who captured this feeling quite as well as John Holt (1964). Through his descriptions of children's feelings, I felt transported back to the hardness of my desk, its coldness to the touch on winter mornings, just one among rows and rows, all facing the blackboard and the teacher's desk. I relived the absolute terror of waiting, just waiting, hoping against all hopes that she wouldn't call my name--but then it would happen. And when it did, I could feel the lump rise in my throat, my heart start to beat faster, and the energy

rushing through my body, making it shake a little and the muscles tighten. It was just a feeling back then, something that happened when you were called on. It didn't have a name, but it always got stronger when you thought of the worst possible thing--"What if I'm wrong?"

Joseph C. Pearce (1980) identifies stress as being a vital element in learning. When stressed, the body produces adrenocorticotropic hormone (ACTH) which activates the adrenal steroids, causing an increased sensitivity to sensory information. However, it can be overdone. Too much stress results in collapse of the system and everything is shut out. Just as important as the stress in learning is a period of relaxation, where the mind can rest easy and assimilate what it has just found out. Inherent in any learning situation is some degree of stress, as the learner must come to grips with the unknown. By creating a fearful state in the child, we disrupt this stress/relaxation cycle and replace it with one of stress/stress. This state of stress/stress may come to be accepted as something inherent in encountering the unknown in any situation. We get very few chances in school to face the unknown in a stress/relaxation cycle. The child has no time to relax when he worries about being right, passing the test, pleasing the teacher. "Anxiety always cripples intelligence," says Pearce (1980, p. 31) It is the source of the fall of the child. As Krishnamurti (1964, p. 11) so simply puts it:

> (Intelligence) is the capacity, surely, to think freely, without fear, without a formula, so that you begin to discover for yourself what is real, what is true; but if you are frightened you will never be intelligent . . . It is really very important while you are young to live in an environment in which there is no fear . . . As we grow older, . . . we are afraid of living, afraid of losing a job, afraid of tradition, afraid of what the neighbors, or wife or husband would say, afraid of death . . . and where there is fear there is no intelligence . . . You cannot inquire, observe, learn, you cannot be deeply aware, if you are afraid. So the function of education, surely, is to eradicate, inwardly as well as outwardly, this fear that destroys human thought, human relationship and love.

The hidden curriculum of our schools teaches just as surely as the daily lessons. Its message is to be passive, resistant to change, inflexible, intolerant, submissive to authority. Children learn the intrinsic value of punctuality, obedience, quietness and repetitive work. As Toffler (1981) points out, what we are actually preparing our children for is life in an industrial society. We find that the principles that underlie this Second Wave culture--standardization, synchronization, concentration, maximization, centralization--also are at the center of our school system. We can see this cultural attitude

> . . . clearly in the language of 'innovative' pedagogy: modular scheduling, accountability, behavior modification, problem-solving, feedback, classroom management . . . These are the terms of the factory and corporation. They are mechanical, lifeless, neither drawn from nor appropriate to organic or animal life, to a creaturely existence, but simply adapted to education from the world of the machine. (Harin, 1975, p. 15)

Also reflecting our industrial culture is education as a prepackaged good on nonending demand, something to be consumed. Through the schools, we have been training our children to

handle and produce better tools, tools that will help them in this industrial world. The trouble is the world is changing. Nothing really new in that, but this time it's changing fast. According to some (Toffler, 1981), we are facing a change that will force us to re-examine old values, old truths, old systems which may not be well-suited to the direction we're moving in. We don't need experts to tell us we're in a state of flux; we can feel the tensions, the pulls, the instability of everyday life. The energy base of industrialism--nonrenewable fuels --is dwindling under greater and greater demands. We are forced to make a shift, and a shift here affects all other aspects of our culture. One question to ask is what does this mean for education? If our schools are based on the ideology of the Second Wave, a culture that can no longer feasibly exist, then aren't we doing a great disservice to our children by filling their school lives with values, beliefs, and a frame of mind of a fading culture? Many talk of the failure built into our school system, but aren't we setting our children up for failure in a much larger sense, by not helping them develop strategies they'll need for a changing world? Perhaps those most hurt are the ones who do "succeed" in school: not only may their "hidden learning" be antagonistic to the changing world, but to life in general. For if we remove the time context, what sort of society exists in which children are raised and encouraged to be passive, intolerant, inflexible,

authoritarian, except a society of domination of the powerful and subordination of the rest?

And For the Future

The basic structures of the world we grew up to know and trust are being rocked about, challenged daily. There's a shakiness in the government, in our families, in our economy, in our schools, just about anywhere we look. A different set of priorities, values, ways of seeing things is surfacing. This undercurrent carries shifts in both the realities of the world and how we perceive them. What is involved is not a causal relationship, but an interactional one. As the world around us changes, our thinking changes. The new thinking may affect the world, which may further change our thinking and so on. Some of the changes in the world reality that are being swept in with the Third Wave are brought into focus by Toffler (1981). Currently, our energy base is shifting towards renewable sources, while our thinking towards energy shifts from what is efficient in the short-term to what is appropriate. Other influences are riding the crest and easy to see: the rapid growth of technology and proliferation of computers. Others are not so apparent at first: the move away from standardization. The trend is to customize to the individual, not to make everyone want the same thing. The era of "the American dream" as one universal goal is fast coming to an end. The new key concept seems to be diversity. We find diversity

everywhere: in family styles, lifestyles, opinions. We find the focus on the individual. This new individual will have far greater, and quicker, access to information. She will also become a prosumer--that is, able to satisfy many of her own needs herself, do things for herself that in the past she turned over to others. "This 3rd Wave of historical change represents not a straight-line extension of industrial society but a radical shift of direction, often a negation of what went before." (Toffler, 1981, p. 349) Given all this, what does it mean in terms of education?

If one of the reasons we educate our children is to help them live in the world, what do we do when we are so unsure of the world ourselves? What can we prepare our children for? Maybe trying to answer this question in terms of specific skills has become futile. What we need to look at is what orientation to the world our children will develop, that which in the past has been influenced by the "hidden curriculum" of the schools. What personal qualities will help them interact with this changing world?

In a world of change where nothing is more certain than change itself, nothing can be more important than an openness of spirit, a flexibility of thought, and still a sense of rootedness in the overall scheme, a feeling of the sense and of the connections behind it all. A tree is strong, not in its rigidity, but in its ability to bend and bow with the wind. It finds strength in its roots, deep in

the earth, from which it sprang and which continues to nourish it. "To enter into the unpredictable situation and accept it openly is to flow with its energy, be augmented in your own energy, and relax its tensions and stresses." (Pearce, 1980, p. 35) To be able not only to see what's going on around us, but to be able to interact with it, to be a part of it, is essential. For this, we need a degree of willingness to adapt, in balance, a strong sense of self.

We see a growing tendency in our culture to cater to the individual. No matter what his consuming--politics, food, or education--the focus has turned to his needs and interests. And his choice of products is greater than even imaginable thirty years back. He can choose just what he wants to suit his fancy, fit his personality, or enhance his style. While all the attention has turned to the individual, it is crucial for the child to be aware that she is an individual among many other individuals. With the growing focus on individual differences, our education must lead us not to tolerate differences, but to value them. We must develop a frame of mind that embraces variety--racial, regional, religious--in all aspects of life.

One of the laws of nature is that diversity leads to stability. If so, it's no wonder that our Second Wave culture with its uniformity and right/wrong thinking was so precariously off-balance. Yet diversity in itself could lead to an even more fractured world. On one hand, our

world is getting smaller; we can travel it in no time. On the other hand, this very ability makes it so much larger. We are no longer confined to a limited environment, but are exposed to more ideas, information, and many, many more people. The key is to be able to use this diversity to create wholes greater than the sums of the parts, and not to use it to separate us further. We must learn to work together, using our differences to complement each other. We must learn to cooperate. It's a skill and an attitude, and one that in our current schools, children aren't being allowed to practice. Education is life. Children can't be expected to develop skills, no matter how valued and praised, that are contradictory to what they actually do for 12+ years of life. This doesn't even make sense. No, the structure of the school must foster interactions among children and give them the support and guidance to play off their differences, and not see them as a hindrance or stumbling block.

There is no doubt that the rise of technology and the computer will radically alter our world. Details are still in the realm of speculation, but the possibilities are endless. What does all this mean for the child and her education? First and foremost, this new world must be one she feels at home with, and not alienated from through ignorance. Perhaps one of the biggest fears of technology is that it will "get out of control." What we really mean

is out of "our control." It may take us places, put us in situations we don't particularly want to be in. Developing an "anthropological perspective" might be part of the answer. (Postman & Weingartner, 1969) This involves the ability to be a part of the culture, and yet to step back and see it from afar. In this vein, Toffler stresses the need to be selective in the technologies that we allow to grow, to choose the ones best suited for long-range social and ecological goals. He sees "technocrats" as a group of knowledgeable, concerned people "not willing to let technology shape our goals, they wish to assert social control over the larger directions of that thrust." (Toffler, 1981, p. 151) For a larger force, Toffler stresses the importance of democratizing decision making in the area of technology. "Either we control technology or it controls us." (1981, p. 152) But a student may develop all the knowledge, skills, and vision to guide technology, and have no power to do it. In which case, what is the good? The power, also, must be her's to use.

Due to many factors, the individual finds he has not more, but less power vis a vis the world in which he lives. For Pearce (1980), this relates to the fact that we've come to deal with the world through action/reaction, and not interaction. For Illich (1970), once we institutionalize anything as we have in the past, we turn our power over to that institution and put ourselves in a passive role.

Toffler (1981) sees the Second Wave culture, its value on automation and professionalism, as convincing us to let the experts handle it. Others watch the rising technology replacing our familiar world with one that seems far too complex to understand. Could it be this very lack of true personal power that leads us to try to find it through illusions of power (professionalism, racism, imperialism)? These satisfy, so the struggle for more goes on. People feel safe with some sort of control, and if they can't, or don't, have it in their own lives, then it may take the form of control over others.

So what is this personal power, and how do we "teach" it? One must be very careful here not to confuse personal power with egoism, or "power-over." Maybe personal competence or self-reliance would be better terms. Not to confuse power with control, it's rather the ability to handle and deal with things that come up on one's own, to be able to do so without society's tools. For useful as they may be, tools themselves cannot lead to security or a feeling of well-being. The strength, or power, must be felt from within. There's a vast difference between using tools and depending on them. When the power comes from within, there is a feeling of ownership in what you do. The corollary is taking responsibility for your actions, of not externalizing, of seeing yourself as an actor and not something that is acted upon.

When it comes to the education of our children in this world of change, what is important? That they have experiences through which they can develop flexibility, responsibility, self-sufficiency, cooperation, humaneness, a sense of self in relation to the world, technical skills to feel competent in the world, and an ability to develop more skills on one's own. We want to nourish and keep alive their curiosity, their wanting to learn, and their self-confidence to try.

How Much Should We Try to Educate?

How much should we really try to educate our children? How much control or guidance do we need of the process? There are people whose answers to these questions fall at both extremes of the scale, and others scattered in between. It seems to depend on how they view the nature of the child and what they see as the purpose of education. Is the child an empty vessel to be filled or a plant that needs only the right conditions to grow? Is our purpose as educators more to transmit the knowledge of the culture or to help the child develop what's already inside?

Among the more radical thinkers is Ivan Illich who believes that "learning is the human activity that least needs manipulation by others." (1970, p. 56) A. S. Neill believes that the child, "if left to himself without adult suggestion of any kind, . . . will develop as far as he is capable of developing." (Rick, 1975, p. 135) Pearce (1980)

draws on many sources, including the work of Piaget and recent findings in brain research to support his belief that there's a biological plan for the development of intelligence. Over the eons, nature has worked out a beautifully coordinated plan for the development of the child, physically and intellectually. However, instead of cooperating with this plan, we have been blocking it every step of the way. As Pearce says, "Childhood is the battleground between the biological plan's intent, which drives the child from within, and our anxious intentions pressing the child from without." (1980, p. xi) Most of our problems with children result from our interference with this biological plan. Children tell us in many subtle, and not so subtle, ways that something is wrong, and when they do, through crib deaths, anorexia nervosa, autism, juvenile delinquency, we look toward research and science to find the cure. This may only compound the issue; we need to look to our children and inside ourselves for the knowledge we lack.

Jerome Bruner (1966) provides a contrast to this line of thinking. For him, university scholars and scientists, with their amassed knowledge, should be the key force in curriculum development. He claims that "schools are wasting precious time by postponing the teaching of important subjects." (1966, p. 12) He recognizes that children see the world in different ways at different stages, which leads to the question, how do we use this information to get

them to learn what we want them to, what's "best" for them? A major point raised in The Magical Child (Pearce, 1980) is that there's more than a slight possibility that we don't know what's "best" for our children. In fact, our efforts may be completely counter to what's "best." It's not to say that one way or the other is best, but just to admit that we're not in the position to know this as a fact and proceed from there. To admit the uncertainty within which we operate allows for a flexibility, a readiness to really look at the child as someone who has something to teach us. Maybe it's a by-product of our school years, but most of us like to be certain, to know we're "right." So once we establish a point, and especially see it down in print, we must see to it that reality corresponds to our truths. Our view becomes biased as we attempt to make the world support our beliefs. Yet, "you can think clearly only when you are not seeking a result--when you have no prejudice." (Krishnamurti, 1964, p. 4)

There is a danger in believing religiously that one educational, or any other, theory is the "right" one. In effect, we stop thinking clearly, so as not to disturb our beliefs and thoughts. In such a state, we are ". . . suffering from an absence of doubt . . . anything that is not (your) truth is a lie." (Freire, 1970, p. 23) This can apply to any innovative theory as well as the more traditional ones. The idea is not to cling to anything as being

"the way," "we've found the best way to teach children," for once you do, rigidity closes in fast, and what may have been best for that particular moment may no longer be true. Not to say that all approaches are the same. We need to be guided by what we feel is right, or "best," but always with an open, searching mind.

Looking at Bruner's statement,

> If one is courteous enough to translate materials in (the child's) logical forms . . . then it is possible to introduce him at any early age to the ideas and styles that in later life will make an educated man (1966, p. 52),

it's hard to miss the overriding tone. The control is definitely in the educator's hands. Not only do we mold the child to a predetermined ideal, but we are being courteous in doing so--implying that we are going out of our way, making it easier on the child. We may indeed want to mold, or encourage certain behaviors, to a given degree, but at the same time we need to respect the child and allow for her individuality. The argument often goes that if we just left them on their own with no controls, there would be mass chaos or worse. This is not to say leave them on their own, but to recognize that control is not possible and leads only to resistance. (Thank you, Betty Jones! That finally comes from the soul and not just the head.) Guidance is possible, structure is necessary--but attempted control for the sake of control is dehumanizing. It ends up in frustration by both people involved, resistance, or worse yet, a gradual turnover over of the self to others.

Indeed, Can We Educate?

This leads to a most important point--the question is not really a matter of should we control education, but rather, can we? Children learn only those things that make some sense to them or have some meaning for them. In this sense, knowledge cannot be transmitted at all, but only offered. In the end, it's up to the child what she will take in, how she will interpret it, and whether or not she remembers it. This is really out of our control. But there's an even deeper meaning to the question of can we educate. How much can we make people do something against their wishes? How real is our control, and how much of it is a mere illusion on our part?

> Subject peoples both appease their rulers and satisfy some part of their desire for human dignity by putting on a mask, by acting much more stupid and incompetent than they really are, by denying their rulers the full use of their intelligence and ability, by declaring their minds and spirits free of their enslaved bodies.
>
> (Holt, 1964, p. 156)

The oppressor mentality described by Paulo Freire (1970) fits our traditional educational system to a T. It consists of the belief that knowledge is a gift bestowed on those who know nothing by those that know everything. There is a tacit chauvinism contained in this viewpoint, whether it shows itself in racism, sexism, or adultism. In the schools, the subject (teacher) does the acting (knowing, thinking, teaching, disciplining), while the children become objects that are acted upon. In this point of view, the

world is presented as given, something that is as it is, that can't be changed (or the oppressor would lose out). so the child must adapt to it as it is. "But we do it for their own good," we cry. "It's all in their best interest!"

> Pedagogy, which begins with the egoistic interests of the oppressor and makes of the oppressed the objects of its humanitarianism itself maintains and embodies oppression . . . It is an instrument of dehumanization.
>
> (Freire, 1970, p. 39)

And what is the child learning of his world from this? The message of the hidden curriculum comes through loud and clear, and we would be fools to think that the children don't hear it.

One of the common characteristics of the oppressor is self-depreciation, which makes it all the more likely that they'll be willing to accept the words of the authorities, those that know. The oppressed come to believe that they are intrinsically inferior. In the case of children, this is easy because, up to a point, they are so dependent on adults. However, can you imagine a world in which for children depending wasn't synonymous with inferiority? A world in which children saw themselves as Pearce does, within perfect and complete stages.

> The three-year-old is not an incomplete five-year-old; the child is not an incomplete adult. Never are we simply on our way; always, we have arrived.
>
> (Pearce, 1980, p. 20)

A world in which each stage was accepted as equal and valuable in its own right. It's almost hard to imagine...

Role of the Teacher/Responsibility of the Child

If the teacher gives up control as his guiding philosophy, then with what does he replace it? On what principles is this new relationship based? In seeing the child as a subject, active in the search to give meaning to her world, the idea of merely transmitting information seems futile. "Human minds operate far more like cycles of nature than like computers." (Samples, et al., 1977, p. 10) We can't presume to be able to feed information and data into the child's mind, have it stored there in the same form we put it in, and have it readily available to recall. Yet this is how we approach a good deal of learning in our schools today. If this model were cast aside, what would the teacher do instead?

The child learns through interacting with his world. He eagerly moves into the unknown, assimilates, or takes in, what he finds there, relates it to what he already knows, and accommodates, or adjusts, to make sense of this new information. The teacher, then, can see to it that the child has access to the experiences that she needs. These would have to have some thread to tie them to the child's pre-existing structures, but be just different enough to supply the stress or conflict necessary for growth. There's a certain paradox inherent in trying to "control discovery,"

and there's a trap there that's very easy to fall into. The teacher can set things up so that discovery can take place, but to go much further may begin to push anxiety on the child. It can become all-important to the teacher, and the child, that she make the "right" discovery. This is not much different from the current right/wrong thinking, only a new process has been added--"discovery." Having to second-guess the teacher remains the name of the game. Children often sense and resent the contrivance of the situation, of being manipulated and controlled. If "how can I make this child learn what I want her to?" is the teacher's primary goal, as long as the focus is on the teacher and his success in achieving this goal, and not on the student and her learning, then no amount of new techniques, curriculum development, or teaching materials will matter. The teacher needs to let go of himself in the Eastern sense. He needs to let go of his ego involvement in the lesson. He needs to let go to the flow of the interaction of the two in the learning process. This is not to minimize the role or erfect of the teacher; she is a most definite figure in the child's world.

As the focus moves toward the child, it is often the case that the teacher is overlooked or underemphasized. Too often we find merely "the teacher must guide the student in the activities of his choice." There's much more involved that often gets left unsaid. To begin with, the personal

qualities, the ideology, the "goodness" of most dedicated teachers is often taken for granted. Yet these qualities have some of the greatest effects on the child's learning. It's said that without strict discipline, without a teacher in firm control, there's chaos in the classroom. Abandoning control does not mean abolishing structure or leadership. In open classrooms I've observed, there is teacher leadership, in many different styles, but it does exist. There are certainly limits, clear limits, and these are known by the child, along with the consequences of going beyond them.

It's very important that the teacher not see herself as the "liberator of the oppressed" in Feire's terms, but as someone "committed to fight at their side." (1970, p. 24) For this to happen, the relationship between student and teacher takes on a significant importance. It opens up into a personal realm, leaving behind tight role behavior of both teacher and student. The teacher needs to create the environment of realness and genuineness. To do this, she must give herself the freedom to be herself, not to step into the cloak of being "a teacher" when entering the school and gratefully throwing it off when all the children are gone. This "being oneself" must go beyond mere familiarity; it is the coming to people unreservedly, the opening of the self that creates the trust needed. Our relationships with others are one of three matrices of safety, according to Pearce (1980) (the other two being the world and our own

power of thought). These matrices are vital to our ability to reach out and learn. They provide "sources of possibility from which to choose experience and sources of energy with which to explore those possibilities." (Pearce, 1980, p. 29)

Not only must the teacher become a real person in the eyes of her students, but she must come to recognize them as persons. This means seeing each student as an individual with his own personality, strengths and weaknesses. It means valuing him, appreciating him, for what he is, his ideas and values, without evaluating him.

> The opportunity to talk openly and freely about themselves and their lives, to people who would listen without judging them, and who were interested in them as human beings rather than as problems to be solved or disposed of has totally remade the lives and personalities of a number of confirmed and seemingly hopeless juvenile delinquents.
>
> (Holt, 1964, p. 174)

It is to recognize that children too have the need to be. Kelley's words are clear and unadulterated, "(I) need to realize that my way cannot be your way, but that your way is as essential to you as mine is to me." (1947, p. 56)

For the student-teacher relationship to have truly personal character, both must be subjects, whose source of action is within. Teachers must take back their personal power. We now have the tendency to look to experts to tell us the best ways to teach and to plan our curriculum. In giving them the responsibility, we relieve ourselves not

only of pressure and a degree of accountability, but also of our power. It is no wonder teachers often feel incompetent and mere relayers of information. We need to reclaim the faith in ourselves and our abilities, to use what information we get from research, to blend it with our experiences to increase our understanding. Like children, we can only really teach something that has some relation to our own experiences. The knowledge must be a part of our inner experiences if it is to come from within. For life to come into the material for the student, the material must live in the teacher. If you think back to your "best teachers," whether in school or not, they were most probably those who had real feeling for, and commitment to, what they taught, combined with a genuine concern for the student. It's hard for a teacher to get excited about something he had no part in creating, something that's handed him from above.

If we see control as being a prime element in a dominant/oppressive relationship, and if this is a mindset we choose not to foster in our children, then the relationship between student and teacher must take on a different tone. It must become one of mutual respect and responsibility, of true interaction between subjects, those whose lives come from within.

Does all this bring us any closer to, not necessarily finding answers, but understanding the questions of what are we teaching in schools today, should we educate,

can we educate, indeed, why educate? If we see education as a means to helping our children make it in the world, then we need to keep a constant eye on what that world really is. In seeing what the world is, we need not close our eyes to what it could become. One mother said to John Holt:

> I think you are making a mistake trying to make school work so interesting for the children. After all, they are going to spend most of their lives doing things they don't like, and they might as well get used to it now.
>
> (Rich, 1975, p. 52)

The idea is not to adapt the child to the world as it is, but to help her build skills to be able to really see the world, carefully evaluate it, and be able to change it. This does not necessarily have to be seen on a grand scale, involving world institutions or values, but rather as a way of living, or approaching the world every day of her life.

> The intelligent person, young or old, meeting a new situation or problem, opens himself up to it; he tries to take in with mind and senses everything he can about it; he thinks about 'it' instead of about himself or what it might cause to happen to him; he grapples with it boldly, imaginatively, resourcefully, and if not confidently at least hopefully; if he fails to master it, he looks without shame or fear at his mistakes and what he can from them.
>
> (Holt, 1964, p. 165)

Education is not something handed down generation to generation, but something that is developed in each person. "True education is to learn <u>how</u> to think, not <u>what</u> to think." (Krishnamurti, 1964, p. 42) The child must see himself as active in the search for knowledge and understanding. Not merely to stand aloof and gather in facts, but to take it in

and wrestle with it if need be. Knowledge comes from both passion and reasons, from the whole person, his lived experiences and feelings. It is never found if one closes the mind or heart.

And what of the search of "the good life?" We may still ask, "Just what is the 'good life' and how do we teach it?"

> You may earn degrees, you may have a series of letters after your name and land a very good job; but then what? What is the point of it all if in the process your mind becomes dull, weary, stupid?
>
> (Krishnamurti, 1964, p. 10)

It is not enough for teachers, parents, adults to ask, "Why educate? What is the 'good life'?" At some point in their lives, the children need to start asking those same questions. For just what is the "good life" is something that must be asked and answered by every individual, and it must be asked anew every day of her life.

CHAPTER II

VIEWS OF NATURE

Nature. What does the word bring to your mind? Animals? Trees? Flowers? A pastoral landscape? Rugged peaks and high cliffs? Chances are pretty good that you associate nature with isolated physical objects. Thinking back to school days, nature studies involved studying those things found in nature: plants, bugs, leaves, maybe a frog or toad.

How were they studied? By ientifying, classifying, collecting, dissecting. Yet, centuries ago, "nature" did not conjure up images of fields of daisies or 35 mm splendors. Whether known best for her fury in storms, her richness and generosity as crops grow, or her constancy as each night lightens into day, nature was alive, vivante, something whose power and personality entered every day of your life. Now,

> this poor, devitalized word 'nature' which we must use to speak of the non-human world has lost its force by coming to mean for us an objectified realm of miscellaneous physical things and events which is outside of and other than us.
>
> (Roszak, 1973, p. 7)

How has this happened? The steady move from the land to the cities has certainly decreased our contact with the natural world. Those people who have any sort of

prolonged, intimate experience with nature are rare indeed. Most people have become spectators of it, watching it go by from a car window. Our decreasing experiences with the natural world are one factor in our current view of nature and our relationship to her. Another great influence on our thinking is the Western culture in which we live.

Traditional Western View

Western culture has not been one to emphasize man's being a part of nature, to focus on the thread running through all of nature that also runs through man himself. On the contrary, man has tried to elevate himself beyond the Earth and her laws throughout Western history. From Plato to Descartes to a current British rock group who exclaim, "We are spirits in the material world!" the same message runs through time. That which is noble and worthy in man, his rational thought, sets him apart from, and above, the natural world. Rational, logical thought finds compatibility in science, for centuries the spirit of Western man.

Science and Nature

Until the challenges of the present, science has been the cardinal supplier of many of the guiding principles and ideals of our culture. One of its basic tenets is objectivity, the attempt to detach oneself as much as possible from whatever is being studied. In doing so, man not only distanced himself from nature, but made it "other

than him." He externalized nature and her workings, and in doing this, began to see them as objects, as fundamentally physical things. This technique may enable him to better understand or explain some things, but it also eliminates the possibility of his feeling a part of what he is studying. It is an understanding that excludes one vital factor --himself. Many of our environmental problems stem from man's inability to recognize his effects on nature. As Roszak believes, "Objective knowledge is alienated knowledge; and alienated knowing is sooner or later, ecologically disasterous knowing." (1973, p. 215)

Objective, logical, rational thinking. Yet nature does not operate in this mode. In nature, simple cause and effect does not exist, for each effect becomes a cause. Nature is teeming with interactions, with webs. Nature is cyclical--there is no end of the line, but forever-flowing circles. In nature, purity, isolation, absolutes are uncommon. One tries to name, to classify to separate. But nature is a blending, a whole, an every-changing process. We think we can understand the whole by understanding the parts. We think that there is a law of nature that is within our grasp, that is waiting to be discovered, that can be found by our thoughts and put into our words. We think that nature follows our mechanistic rules. Seen another way,

> It appears nature is a mechanism because such a mentality can grasp only as much of nature as it can fit into

> some mechanical or mathematial analogy. Thus it never really sees nature. It sees only the pattern of geometrical forms which it has managed to project on it.
>
> (Watts, 1970, p. 41)

Still, it is not the objective, rational, mechanistic mode of thought that is being questioned, but as the belief in its universal supremacy and applicability. Science looks at a mountain lake and gives us pH readings, at thunderclouds and gives us ion concentration. Yet mountain lakes and thunderheads "have values foreign to science." (Schwartz, 1969, p. 118) In our unswerving belief in the ultimate value of scientific thought, we try to examine nature by a thought process that opposes her very nature.

> There is much to suggest that when human beings acquired the powers of conscious attention and rational thought, they became so fascinated with these new tools that they forgot all else, like chickens hypnotized with their beaks to a chalk line. Our total sensitivity became identified with these partial functions so that we lost the ability to feel nature from the inside, and more, to feel the seamless unity of ourselves and the world.
>
> (Watts, 1970, p. 7)

Technology and Nature

If science is the spirit of Western culture, then technology can be considered the brain. Taking all the findings of science and creating from them anything and everything that will speed us along in our progress. Progress toward what? Progress toward the civilized, the man-inspired and man-created, away from the primitive. Progress has been measured by the substitution, improvement

on, or elimination of that found in nature, or by the ability to analyze or control her. (Roszak, 1973) Synthetic fibers replace those nature has given, foods are treated to make them last longer, look better, and hold more nutritional value. All the machines and tools designed for our comfort and convenience move us further from our dependence on unpredictable nature. Or so we imagine. We create our own environment and then conveniently forget where our building blocks came from and what they're powered by. Even in farming, perhaps the occupation where one could find the closest connection between man and the Earth, man has invented ways to separate himself from her as much as possible. He sends out machines to do his work. He domesticates her through objective knowledge of her ways, her growth cycles, in order to manage her better. He [illegible] chemicals to her in order to get the best results [illegible]can imagine. He crosspollinates in order to create a strain that has just the characteristics he desires. The Earth is just there as a means to his ends.

"Technology fosters the illusion that we are self-sufficient, separate, and in control." (Galland, 1980, p. 123) Nothing could be further from the truth. The link we fail to see is still there. And technology has become increasingly threatening to its own support base, nature. Intense impact technologies, now seen in logging, farming, fishing, mining, have supplanted less destructive ones.

Technology also focuses in on one question or problem--its solution being its only goal. This narrow vision prevents it from seeing the complex whole of nature, which it nevertheless affects. The nitrogen-rich fertilizers we put in our fields do yield more crops; they are also carried in the run-off waters to the streams and lakes where they enrich the water for algae growth which affects the life there. Our laundry detergents do give us a whiter wash than old-fashioned soaps. However, once in our water supply, they also act on the lining of the digestive tract in a way that increases the absorption of dangerous chemicals in those tissues. DDT did kill insects: it also killed fish, eagles, and anything else along the food chain. Yet what we want are bigger crop yields, whiter washes, and freedom from bugs, and that is all technology promised. What is important to realize is that "these pollution problems arise not out of some minor inadequacies in the new technologies, but because of their very success in accomplishing their designed aims." (Commoner, 1972, p. 183) Perhaps it is its very success in providing what it promised, what we needed, that puts our faith in technology. It seems that there's nothing it can't do, that through it, we can control or improve on anything, and fix anything that we may damage or destroy. What a false sense of supremacy this gives us! We have come to embody what the Greek tragedians knew as "hubris"--"the overweening pride of the doomed." (Roszak,

1973, p. 19) There is nothing we can't do or control. Roszak (1973) also reminds us of the timeliness of a childhood favorite--Hans Christian Andersen's The Nightingale --whose message may find renewed meaning in its reader's minds.

Industry and Nature

Technology for all areas of our lives is brought to our doorsteps through industry. Industry--the mass-producing, mass-marketing backbone of the Western world. Traditionally, industrialists have seen nature as an endless storehouse of raw materials to be used in the most efficient and economical manner toward production, and as a convenient dumping ground for any of its wastes. This one-way relationship on such a massive scale is bound to have consequences for the Earth, and all that it related to her, including man. Yet our goal is nonending comfort, and "forethought is incompatible with now-greed." (Charter, 1970, p. xxii) So we go on producing and try to deal with the problems we create when they arise. And it's really no wonder they do, for the basic premises of industrialism--efficiency, standardization, synchronization, maximization--all go against the very grain of nature.

Efficiency implies orderliness, cleanliness, non-superfluousness, not a minute wasted. And we attempt to make nature conform. We undertake "clean farming"--focusing all energy into the economically profitable product, and getting rid of everything else. Rachel Carson comments,

> Our attitude towards plans is a singularly narrow one. If we see any immediate utility for a plant we foster it. If for any reason we find its presence undesirable or merely a matter of indifference, we may condemn it to destruction forthwith . . . many are marked for destruction merely because, according to our narrow view, they happen to be in the wrong place at the wrong time.
>
> (1962, p. 64)

We fail to even consider that nature may have guidelines other than our economy, preferences, and whims. Just because we see no use for something in nature doesn't mean that that part doesn't play a role we may be completely ignorant of. Yet efficiency-related ideals have become a part of our everyday lives, so much so that we fail to even question them. A standard of a well-kept lawn is set: that it should be green, neat, cut, free from leaves and sticks, and composed only of grass. Roadsides are also gaining our care and attention, being trimmed regularly so as to appear neat and orderly.

Indeed, any area that passes our line of vision often enough may soon be "straightened up" and take on that well-manicured look. I find that each time I return to my hometown, known for its location in the wilds of the North, in the heart of "God's country," one more area previously left to nature's ways has been "tidied up." The old beach, found by leaving the road and following trails through fields of wildflowers and high grass that tickled your legs, leading to the edge where you could jump or run down into the warm sand, had caught the eye of the City Parks

Department. The field has now been sodded and is cut regularly. Wooden posts encircle the area, marking it off from any mess of nature beyond its boundaries. A stairway is now to be used if you wish to venture down to the beach. This compulsion to clean up and domesticate the Earth is definitely with us today, but may have reached a peak in the eighteenth century.

> Even the night sky was criticized for the way in which the stars lie carelessly scattered . . . by handfuls, and not a skillful hand, either . . . What a beautiful hemisphere they would have made if they had been placed in rank and order . . . according to the rules of art and symmetry!
>
> (Schwartz, 1969, p. 39)

Another golden rule of industry, standardization, finds no place in nature. Quite the contrary, nature thrives on diversity. Not only does this lend beauty and excitement to the world, but it is nature's mechanism for stability, ensuring the needed checks and balances. In winter snows, we can find no two flakes that are identical--the antithesis of standardization.

Synchronization imposes its own time schedule, based on mechanical efficiency. Nature's rhythms are internal and have been flowing steadily since the beginning of time. Each in its own time, all blending into the flow of nature. Compared to the deliberate pace of nature, our industrial world runs at breakneck speed. Always on the go, time is money. Have we been able to catch our breath to ask ourselves where we're going? It's a fact of physics: as speed

increases, angle of vision decreases. (Charter, 1970) We may need to rediscover the tempo of nature to dispel our speed-induced tunnel vision.

Another key to industry is to maximize--maximize product, maximize profit. To do this, one develops a utilitarian eye. "What use does it serve?" "What good is it?" If no answer is obvious, get rid of it. It can only be in the way. Always ask, "Will it serve our purposes?"

> Trees growing in a forest should be useful trees. For each tree ask if it is worth the space it grows in.
>
> (Griffin, 1978, p. 57)

A utilitarian view of nature, one that considers only our own interests, and does not consider the interests of nature to be of equal importance, cannot hold out in the long run.

> The last word in ignorance is the man who says of an animal or plant: 'What good is it?' If the land mechanism as a whole is good, then every part is good, whether we understand it or not. If the biota, in the course of aeons, has built something we like but do not understand, then who but a fool would discard seemingly useless parts? To keep every cog and wheel is the first precuation in intelligent tinkering.
>
> (Leopold, 1970, p. 189)

Industry, then, following the lead of technology, sent us hurling along with progress always at our side, and a better life at the end of the road. Nature was there for us to use, not only supplying the raw materials, but the fossil fuels with which to run our machines. So we continued to fabricate items and machines that enable us to lead our lives with minimal contact with the Earth. Our

created world brings its own time-clocks and mind set, incongruous with the rhythms and workings of nature. Through science, technology, and industry, we have put mechanisms between us and the Earth, to which we still remain connected. There is another, less obvious force in Western culture that has influenced our separation from nature--Christian religion.

Christianity and Nature

Prior to Christianity, people believed in animism or pantheism, where the world around them was infused with life. Christianity not only denied all this, but set up a hierarchy, with man as the pinnacle of God's earthly creations. It is through man that we can come closest to God, and particularly through his ability to think abstractly of the real world, the world beyond the mere physical world of nature. It is quite fitting that the Church chose to center itself in the city, the environment of man's design. This emphasis on the thinking, rational qualities is what leads Watts to say, "the Christian world, as we know it, is only a half-world in which feeling and the symbolically feminine is unassimilated." (1970, p. 27) Christianity, in promoting man as God's favored creature, and in destroying animistic beliefs, becomes, in essence, the conscience of Western man. It gives him permission to exploit nature for his own good, with no concern for a world no longer alive or clearly inferior to him. He can even find Biblical justification:

and you shall have dominion over all the earth, and all its creatures. What's more, there's a gut feeling of incompatibility between Christianity and the world of nature. As Watts says,

> For as long as I can remember, I have been puzzled by the fact that I can feel like a Christian only when I'm indoors. As soon as I get into the open space, I feel entirely out of relation with everything that goes on in a church.
>
> (1970, p. 26)

This may in part be due to Christianity's emphasis on the world beyond, on the spirit, on faith in things beyond our perceptions whereas the world of nature is very real, very immediate, bombarding every sense. When you're in her midst, whether at sea or in mountains, in fields or in canyons, on serene days or storm-ridden nights, the vitality surrounding you is impossible to deny. It is intense and pulsating, and comes from deep within not far from above.

Imperialism and Nature

Through imperialism, another cultural doctrine, man takes this God-sanctioned domination to its limit. He became convinced of his supremacy over the primitive, including those peoples closer to nature (i.e., less industrial) and over nature itself. And he wasted no time in proving his domination and control through acts of power and exploitation. With regard to nature, he controlled her in whatever ways he could. Physically, he altered her to conform to his standards, bending her to serve his purposes.

> In his mind, he no longer relies on her. What he possesses, he says, is his to use and abandon.
>
> (Griffin, 1978, p. 54)

At times, his need to control seems almost desperate, as he tries to fit the Universe to his schemes, and then believes that his schemes are the Truth, since nature follows them to the letter. (It does not occur to him that his schemes merely describe what nature would have done anyway.)

It almost seems that those in situations still obviously linked to nature are those that grab for the greatest control, the most power. Farmers, as mentioned before, foresters, and those who deal with rebellious nature inside us--the doctors.

> The simple truth is that the likes to use his tricks; he likes the drama and importance of his image, wielding all his mechanial toys, showing the incompetence of nature, and establishing his own superiority.
>
> (Pearce, 1980, p. 65)

We try to convince ourselves with our innumerable devices and our endless collection of facts and figures that we are in control. For, "we have, as a culture, been talked into the proposition that our security as a species depends upon our power over nature." (Roszak, 1979, p. 49) We use our knowledge and tools every chance we get. We can turn raging rivers into adjustable water flows with our dams. Even chemical weed killers "give a giddy sense of power over nature to those who wield them." (Carson, 1962, p. 69) It appears that there is very little that nature can do that is

beyond our prediction or control. And we're always on top of it, trying our best to outsmart her, to come out the victor. "As one young physicist put it, nature is 'hard to push around,' but said he with a gleam in his eye--'we are reaching the point where we can do it.'" (Schwartz, 1969, p. 44)

This illusory power over nature involves us all. Not only scientists, technicians, doctors wield their power over nature. As part of our everyday living, we, too, place our control over nature without a second thought. We may not even be aware of doing it. We sculpt our gardens and lawns, pave our driveways, defy natural time with our modern transportation, [illegible] night into day, winter into summer, summer into winter. It's all so much a part of our lifestyle. But then so was slavery at one time, along with our national imperialism, our subordinate view of women. None of these are resolved, but they are recognized as issues and their individual rights theoretically admitted. It's becoming more and more accepted that it is wrong for us to feel we can, or should, control or manage other people, even if "we know best, and it's for their own good." Our cultural ignorance toward the Earth may be the last to die. It may not have occurred to us to grant the planet the same unalienable rights as her human inhabitants.

In this culture of scientific thought, technoloical advances and industrialism, nature is seen as something to move beyond, to improve upon, to use for profit. Man moves

further and further from the relationship with the Earth that his ancestors knew. The world he has created, in fact, operates on different principles, different values, sometimes in complete opposition to those found in nature. As industrial man reveled in his own power and genius, in creating his own world, and eagerly pursued the unattainable Progress, there were those who felt there was another way. Their view of nature, and man's relation to her, was rather different.

Other Voices

Romanticist

The Romantic movement of the nineteenth century again recognized the life force within nature. Before this, Rousseau claimed that the ideal education was to take place in the country, amid the life of nature, and that the "noble savage" had certain admirable qualities, often not found in civilized Western man. These ideas opened many minds to a world other than that found through objective, rational thought in a growing industrial age. Mostly poets, artists, authors, the Romanticists found a cause in everything the Age of Reason had denied. They found meaning in reality, in the physical world, and not in the realm of the mind. Their works sprang from their spirits, imbued with passion, emotion, enthusiasm as a counter to the cold, impartial, rational writings of Locke and Discartes. Not that the

Romanticists were opposed to Reason as such, but they opposed its elevated status in Western culture, to the exclusion of all other sensibilities. They ached for wholeness, for the human being who accepted with pride not only his powers of the mind, but those of the spirit and soul. They sought to re-establish their close ties with the Earth, recognizing their kinship with all of nature. They felt the wrongness in the split and denial of part of their being, and were "the first significant antitoxin generated within the body of our society to meet the infectious spread of single vision." (Roszak, 1973, p. 257) They also expressed an uncanny forboding of the despair and dangers involved in living in a world of man's design. The first traces of existential meaninglessness can be found in their laments; as man rejects the world his ancestors were born into for one of his own making, then wonders why the universe makes no sense and he feels estranged from it. Yet he continues substituting everything around him with his own words, striving for the ultimate--an entirely manmade world. Yet through the insight of a nineteen-year-old girl we consider that the ultimate may not be the ideal we assumed it would be, as Mary Shelly creates Frankenstein. Yes, "since Rousseau and the Romantics, hostility toward the artificial environment has run through our culture like a soft, lyrical counterpoint to the swelling cacophony of the machine." (Roszak, 1973, p. 12)

Transcendentalist

Following the Romanticists, the Transcendentalists found a new land in which to explore the relationship of man and nature in the wilderness of North America. In contrast to the Puritanical view of the wilderness as the domain of evil, the Transcendentalists found in the wilderness the gateway to normal truths, a sympathetic and wise environment in times of agony and fear. (Nash, 1965) A value in wilderness for its own sake was a novel idea. Yet this was the light shone on nature by such men as Emerson, Muir, Thoreau, Burroughs, Longfellow. For Thoreau, the wild country was essential not only to his own spirit, but to what he saw as the quality of American life. Again, it was not merely nature as an Ultimate Good, to the exclusion of all else, but as an integral part of the whole human being. Thoreau notes

> Here in this vast, savage, howling mother of ours, Nature, lying all around, with such beauty and such affection for her children, as the leopard; and yet we are so early weaned from her breast to society, to that culture which is exclusively an interaction of man on man--a sort of breeding in and in, which produces . . . a civilization destined to have a speedy limit.
>
> (Roszak, 1973, p. 3)

Not only did Thoreau and other Transcendentalists question the relationship (or lack of it) between man and nature, but also the objective, utilitarian view of nature that was so pervasive at the time. Muir recognized the "enormous conceit" in the belief that the world was made for man's use.

(Nash, 1965, p. 215) Thoreau puts it simply, "This curious world we inhabit is more wonderful than it is convenient; more beautiful than it is useful; and more to be admired than it is to be used." (Schwartz, 1969, p. 166)

The blended voices of the Romanticists and Transcendentalists sought to restore fullness to man's being. They sensed something, perhaps intuitively, about the Earth's ways: her balances, her harmonies, her rhythms. They sang out as poets, artists, philosophers, and while they were revered by some and barely tolerated by others, no matter what they said, it did not have the power of the voice of Reason. Their knowledge was not arrived at by the most valued method of our culture, and therefore could not ascribe to the same credibility as those facts known through scientific proof. According to our culture, intuition and poetic knowledge are not legitimate ways of knowing. That any truth could be discovered outside the process of logical, rational analysis is not conceivable in our culture. Yet this was not the case among all peoples.

Native American

The native people of the American wilderness had great respect for modes of knowing not readily accepted by Western culture. Intuitive and supersensory knowledge often confirmed what they felt to be true through their experiences with the world around them. Though it is very common to think of a single "Indian culture," in fact, the tribes were

as varied in their customs, beliefs, and ways of life as the European nations. Yet, native American cultures shared a fundamental base, a common tenet of the character of the Earth and man's relation to her. The Earth was seen as the Mother, the life-giving (and taking) force who was respected as such. All living things on Earth were filled with the same spirit of life as man, all coming from the same Earth. The harmony and union with nature that Romanticists idealized seemed to be a matter of fact in the poem

> I am simply on this earth
> need I be afraid?
>
> (Source Unknown)

For the Senecas, it was this connection with the earth that made each of them a "real" person--

> one who hasn't forgotten what and where things are in relation to the Earth. Earth-rooted, he is royal, too, not by precedence of birth, but insofar as he has and shares a knowledge of the realm. He has only to maintain a true eye for his surroundings and a contact with the Earth, to recognize himself as the inheritor of reality, of a more real way of life.
>
> (Rothenberg, 1972, p. xx)

This is a way to real life that Western man had not yet realized, and it is perhaps in light of this fact that the Senecas looked upon the white man as "younger brother." Indeed, the ways of the white man with regard to nature were not only foreign to Native Americans, but degrading and painful. Yet how could a people who had not advanced to Reason and whose way of life was so crude compared with that of industrial society, have developed anything but foolish

beliefs and superstitions? With an understanding and wisdom of the Earth and man's place in it far beyond even the comprehension of Western man, Chief Seattle writes to President Pierce

> The Great Chief in Washington sends word that he wishes to buy our land. How can you buy or sell the sky--the warmth of the land? The idea is strange to us. Yet we do not own the freshness of the air or the sparkle of the water. How can you buy them from us? Every part of this earth is sacred to my people.
>
> We know that the white man does not understand our ways. One portion of the land is the same to him as the next, for he is a stranger who comes in the night and takes from the land whatever he needs. The earth is not his brother but his enemy, and when he has conquered it he moves on. He leaves his fathers' graves and his children's birthright is forgotten.
>
> There is no quiet place in the white man's cities. No place to hear the leaves of spring or the rustle of insect wings. But perhaps because I am savage and do not understand--the clatter only seems to insult the ears. And what is there to life if a man cannot hear the lovely cry of the whippoorwill or the arguments of the frogs around the pond at night?
>
> The whites too shall pass--perhaps sooner than other tribes. Continue to contaminate your bed and you will one night suffocate in your own waste. When the buffalo are all slaughtered, the wild horses all tame, the secret corners of the forest heavy with the scent of many men, and the view of the ripe hills blotted by talking wires. Where is the thicket? Gone. Where is the eagle? Gone. And what is it to say good-bye to the swift and the hunt, the end of living and the beginning of survival?
>
> 1855

Before I started reading, I had intended to simply describe the relationship of man with nature through time. What I failed to notice was that through my own cultural influences, I had defined Western man's relation to nature

as the man/nature relationship. Despite all its polarities (Reason vs. Romanticist) the end of the line still came down to man's stewardship over the earth. Would exploitation or wise management win out? Yet all of a sudden it became apparent that there were cultures based on entirely different premises, with ways of thinking that didn't follow our rules. It became essential to realize that just because a dominant viewpoint may be the only one visible (perhaps to insure its own dominance) does not negate or diminish the importance or truth of others. The Native Americans provided one such example. The Chinese have another.

Eastern

The whole culture of the Chinese is so unlike our own that it is difficult to isolate one aspect, the relation of man and nature, and explain it within our own framework of time, space, and language. The division between man's spirit/nature which is at the core of our relation with nature, has no meaning for them. Whereas we think in terms of entities, the Chinese experience the process. While we focus on the breaks, the divisions, they may see the continuity, the relations. Our bodies are divided from the rest of the world by our skin in thought only, not as a fact of reality. In a different light, skin can be a connector, a joiner, bringing the air and warmth of the outer world to the inner one. (Watts, 1970) It is rather like the figure/ground images of psychology tests--the familiar two faces or

cup--what you see depends on what you focus on. There is nothing to suggest that this focusing of attention is a property of our visual sense only.

To begin to understand how the Chinese see themselves and nature, one must begin to discover the Tao. This is not so much a set of concepts or principles as it is a way of life. Not a way of life to be consciously followed, but the way of all life. It is the course of the universe, found everywhere. We can't follow the Tao because we are it. "Willy nilly we are it and go with it." (Watts, 1975, p. 38) Whereas Westerners might feel the way of nature to be foreign or in opposition to our beings, the Chinese have a "respectful trust towards nature and human nature." (Watts, 1975, p. 32) Their way, then, involves a not-searching, non-striving attitude. One does not learn by trying to. This trying can only get in the way. One observes "silently, openly, and without seeking any particular result . . . there is no duality of seer and seen; there is simply seen." (Watts, 1970, p. 74) There is a certain letting go of the self, a surrendering of the ego involved. One finds strength in flowing with the Tao, not fighting against it. The organism, whether man himself or the whole of nature, regulates itself spontaneously. Its order is organic, internal; it does not follow external rules. It needs no help from man's ego, however well-intended. As Lao-tzu said,

> Those who would take over the world and manage it,
> I see that they cannot grasp it;
> for the world is a spiritual [shen] vessel
> and cannot be forced.
> Whoever forces it spoils it.
> Whoever grasps it loses it.
>
> (Watts, 1975, p. 52)

Such a contrast with the young physicist who found nature "hard to push around," but thinks we're almost at the point where we can do it.

Taoists see that it is only through relation to everything else that anything is what it is.

> The bewildering complexity of nature is a dance with no destination other than the figures now in performance, figures improvised not in response to an overruling law, but mutually to each other.
>
> (Watts, 1970, p. 124)

And man is a dancer in this dance as surely as the water or fire or stars. As Watts describes, "I feel the whole world to be moved from the inside, and from an inside so deep that it is my inside as well, more truly than my surface consciousness." (1970, p. 46)

Wisdom from the East is beginning to be recognized by some in our culture, or they may have listened to the Earth long enough to hear the same message. Perhaps with our environmental problems to make the point clearer, man is coming to realize that he is connected not only to the rest of the human race, but to all living things, to the Earth herself. "He is joined with them practically; he is also joined with them mentally and spiritually." (Schwartz, 1969,

p. 161) Some men are beginning to recognize that the wildness that is part of Nature is also found within them. Some are finding that it is only at their peril that they detach themselves from the Earth. And these are not only poets, artists, but scientists, professors, legislators. They have a new message for our world. Yet there is another voice in our country, speaking out; fainter perhaps than theirs, but only because it lacks the loudspeakers of power. It is a voice of those whose relationship with the Earth is old and sacred, and is now finding new life. It is the voice of Woman.

Woman

That women of Western society should have any different thoughts on nature than the culture as we've come to know it doesn't seem very likely at first. But it wasn't an oversight that the term "man" was used up to this point in discussing the human relationship with the Earth. Actually using "man" came naturally, not because of conventionality, but because the whole Western relationship with nature is predominantly of masculine orientation. It involves themes of aggression, logic, reason, objectivity, domination--all traditionally masculine characteristics. Although these traits are considered "masculine," that is not meant to say that <u>all</u> Western men automatically possess them, or possess them to the same degree, anymore than <u>all</u> women equally share "feminine" traits or values. Every individual moves back and

forth, to some extent, along the continuum of masculine/feminine depending on experience, the situation, the issue. And, as time goes on, more and more men seem to be questioning this "masculine" orientation toward nature. However, these men are most definitely in the minority. In the past, and into the present, this attitude of domination continues as our general cultural view towards nature.

Why this masculine attitude toward nature? Partly, man feared Nature, feared the wildness in Her that he could see in himself, indeed that is part of our nature. To purge himself of the wildness, he projected it onto women. This wildness threatens his power to be in control. Hostility and domination are found in our culture toward both women and nature.

> I think our culture is in fact an expression of the terror and our terrible fear and revenge against nature because we can't accept that we are in fact creatures that aren't always in control, aren't always in logical control.
>
> (Galland, 1980, p. 67)

But women have a different history with Nature. Traditionally, women have been associated with the Earth. All the symbolism of our day depicts the Earth as female, as Mother, and woman as organic. Nurturing, life-givers, tied to the cycles of the moon--they share her secrets and powers. Ancient rituals, secret ceremonies celebrated the female, the Earth, and found strength and wisdom in her. Women who had deep knowledge of the Earth and her ways, witches, often used their powers to restore harmony to the sick. Rather

than learning from this wisdom, man, threatened, destroyed it. Man, having detached himself from the Earth, having turned to the mind, the spirit, attempted to purge himself of the opposite by relegating it to "the other"--to Woman. The corporal, the physical, the feeling and emotional, the intuitive only strengthened woman's ties with the Earth.

> The Earth is my sister; I love her daily grace, her silent daring, and how loved I am, how we admire this strength in each other, all that we have lost, all that we have suffered, all that we know; we are stunned by this beauty and I do not forget: What she is to me, what I am to her.
>
> (Griffin, 1978, p. 219)

It is woman who has carried on the daily living, who has, through her chores, kept close contact with the elements of the earth and unraveled "the patterns." (Griffin, 1978) It is woman who finds the unknowns exciting, for the very qualities they possess; always possibilities, always open. Man, too, is excited by unknowns, but by his conquest of them--his reducing them to certainties and sureness, or at least probabilities. For it is the fear of losing control that is absolutely terrifying. It may be for this reason that man turned toward the surety of Reason and Logic, and refused the feminine in himself, and also stepped back from Nature. There is a wildness in nature, the same wildness that flows through us all. By projecting it onto woman and nature only, man can free himself from internal conflict. It becomes expressed as hostility against "the other"--woman and nature. A combination of fear, revenge and need to control.

> Not only do we fear and attempt to control what we perceive as 'other,' but we compound our error by imagining that it, whether it is woman or nature, is separate and incidental to us.
>
> (Galland, 1980, p. 70)

Man attempts to control nature both physically and with his knowledge--for knowledge and power are one. Therefore, he names, numbers, classifies, serrates, codifies, then manipulates his knowledge to his liking under the illusion that he is manipulating or controlling the reality behind it. He does this with utmost seriousness, for through his knowledge he decides what is real. And women?

> We play with numbers. Charming and sweet, we play little games with them, these figures. They are pale reflections, without the gravity of being the potato, the glacier, the growth of lichen, the feather of an egret, the flecks in the iris of an eye, cracks in the dry clay of soil, or the shed shell of a turtle, all of which they quantify, from which they all derive, the material forms whose awesome processes these numbers merely imitate.
>
> (Griffin, 1978, p. 189)

Woman experiences the world differently. Her passive openness and receptivity, very much like the Chinese "Kuan," leads to a nonseeking, a dying of the ego. She does not deny or block the flow of nature through her, connecting her with the world, but is vitalized by it and finds strength and power in it. She "knows" the connections in the Chinese sense of the word--with "brain" and "heart" together. (Griffin, 1978)

> We know ourselves to be made from this earth. We know this earth is made from our bodies. For we see ourselves. And we are nature. We are nature seeing nature

> . . . Nature weeping . . . The redwing blackbird flies in us, in our inner sight.
>
> (Griffin, 1978, p. 226)

Nature flowing through us, we feel the crimes committed against nature, the injustices, the exploitation, the rape, for it was committed against us, too. "In the depth of (our) tormented personhood, women--some women--join forces with the life of the planet and become her peculiar voice." (Roszak, 1979, p. 45) As women rediscover their rich past, the wisdom of their ancestors, and their own relationship with the Earth, they see that the world we live in is not whole and that "only when the female side of existence emerges from the wilderness and becomes active within us all, the implicit order of the world will be affirmed." (Galland, 1980, p. 114)

If we listen carefully today, we hear voices that are speaking out against the traditional Western view of humans' relationship to nature. These voices, awakened by explorations of other cultures, their own past, or the Earth herself, are discovering a new, deeper relationship. There are those who recognize that the course we have been following is headed toward destruction of ourselves and our planet. We are using nonrenewable fuels at an alarming rate. We have seriously tampered with the Earth's built-in mechanism for cleansing. We have altered her self-adjusting ability. Some advise that we must be more frugal; we must be more careful. Thus we develop energy-efficient cars and homes in

an attempt to make the little that is left go a little further. We try to understand the ways of nature so we may exploit her more wisely, more scientifically, more conscientiously. The fundamental premise still guides our way. Not only is the whole concept of exploitation false, but it presupposes a control that man does not have. "The apparently depressing thing is not merely that the universe is not to be pushed heedlessly around, but the very state of mind in which we attempt to do so is an illusion." (Watts, 1970, p. 5) We may be very subtle and gentle: "Our aim should be to guide natural resources as cautiously as possible in the desired direction rather than to use brute force" (Carson, 1962, p. 243), but our frame of reference is still that of an egocentric child. We may act in the belief that we're doing it for the good of the planet, but this form of control reeks of conceit, egoism, and still puts us in the self-appointed position of supreme power and domination. While a new mind-set is desperately needed, these voices have had one remarkable effect--they have brought the issue to the people.

Importance of Recognizing One's Place in Nature

In the 1970s the awareness of environmental problems skyrocketed. Crisis followed crisis, and soon connections between our actions and the reactions in the environment were all too obvious. Ecology, DDT, thermal pollution, soon became household words. It was considered quite fashionable

to be concerned about the environment. Did this increased concern and action result from a better understanding of our place in the world around us, or was it more of a fad, something with a quick rise to popularity only to be just as quickly replaced with some other cause? As Watts says, "Our view of nature is largely a matter of changing intellectual and literary fashions, for it has become a world strangely alien to us." (1970, p. 2)

Strangely alien to us indeed. We have separated ourselves from her by machines and middlemen and isolated ourselves in urban environments where any sign of nature is mere tokenism. A vital link is being lost to our sight. It is becoming harder and harder to see our roots in the Earth, to look beyond the gadgets and middlemen and see the earth as the source of all, the origin of life, who was here long before us, and will live on long after we have gone. As we confine ourselves to cities, we lose insight into the ways of nature. And "as cities become bigger, the sum total of practical ecological sensitivity in the population diminishes." (Roszak, 1979, p. 254) This is not to say that cities are bad through some intrinsic characteristics, but only in the sense that they show only one way of life, that they can keep us from experiencing the natural world. As La Bastille says, "Not that I dismiss the richness of cities . . . But alienation from nature is far more widespread than alienation from concrete." (1980, p. 289) The point is more and more people are living in cities, and more and more

children are growing up there. "A child on the streets of New York never touches anything that has not been scientifically developed, engineered, planned, and sold to someone." (Illich, 1970, p. 155)

Our direct contact is with our manmade environment, which is for us the real world. It's not surprising, then, when an eight-year-old is amazed to see eggs under chickens, and then reassures himself that even if chickens do lay eggs, they surely can't be like the ones you buy in the store. For from his experiences, eggs come in plastic cartons from the grocery store. Or a fifteen-year-old from Chicago who on her first wilderness trip turns a bend in the trail and discovers a small waterfall over mossy rocks. "Oh neat!" she cries out. "It's just like the one in the downtown mall!" Then with a "you can't fool me" look in her eye, "Did you guys plan this?" While we may laugh a little at the child's twisted sense of precedence, I always find my body tinged with dread after such incidents. "Oh it's just a part of growing up," others reassure me. "Kids find these things out in time." But do they? So many children are growing up with the unchallenged belief that their world is the world.

So is there anything really wrong with a child thinking eggs come from the supermarket? That the waterfall is just like the one in the mall? Some argue no--that after correcting any factual inaccuracies--the world that the child experiences daily is "the" world. This is the age

of technology, plastics, computers; this is the world the child will come to live in. Then why does this scare me so? It scares me to see a lack of perception of the Earth as source. It scares me to see a lack of differentiation between the manmade and the natural. And it scares me that so many children's, and grown-up's, points of reference are the manmade, without any realization of the original.

It is so easy today to fail to make much differentiation between the natural and the manmade. This is most likely so because almost the only manner in which nature enters our lives these days is in the forms of objects. The plant on the desk is bought at a greenhouse, used for decoration, watered occasionally, discarded when it's dead or doesn't work, then easily replaced. Not much different from a pillow or electric pencil sharpener. Yet the manmade world and the natural world are of very different fabrics. The natural world is enlivened from within. A very simple fact. A very basic difference. Because of its internal force, the natural has a rather mysterious character, an unpredictability and independence which the manmade cannot share. We may consider some high technology rather mysterious, but only because we haven't taken the time to study and understand it. Often the greater the simplicity, the greater the mystery in nature. No matter how deep one goes in the natural, you find you can only go deeper.

The natural operates on different principes: it is cyclical, not linear, ever-changing, not static, connected,

not isolated. The natural offers a different way of being than the manmade, and our children should be allowed to experience it. For there is danger in knowing only the manmade. Implicit in it is not only control, but predictability, utility, and replaceability. The manmade is functional and not only made by man, but for him, to fulfill his needs or desires. Inherent in the manmade is ownership; not only was it made for him, but it now belongs to him. And this generalizes. People do reflect their environment. A predominantly manmade environment can foster such a mindset in its inhabitants, and such a mindset affects the way we treat both other people and the natural world.

It would appear then that our manmade environment has us precariously off-balance, that much of the environmental hoop-la of the 1970s was only the following of the Zeitgeist, and that many conservationists, despite good intentions, are merely promoting the idea of wise and carefully planned exploitation. But on yet another current, there are voices that are proclaiming a radical, two-way relationship with nature. They feel the life flow of nature joining all things, including all people. Inextricably tied, the needs of the person are also the needs of the planet, and thus it follows that the rights of the person also belong to the planet. (Roszak, 1979) But this is so contrary to the basic assumption that is fundamental to our whole culture:

> It is standard, though absurd and ridiculous, belief that in the 3 billion years of experimenting, life has evolved our huge and brilliant mind-brain system in order that we might have the intellect to outwit and so survive this life system that has evolved us. That is, we really believe we have a superior brain in order that we might outwit nature, and we believe we must outwit nature in order to survive her. Outwitting means acting against, dominating, overcoming, removing the causes of stress. Interaction, the cooperative flow of energy with the life system, is then quite lost to view.
>
> (Pearce, 1980, p. 39)

A contrasting theory is that the Earth has evolved our mind to its present point so humans can serve as a sort of central nervous system to the Earth as a living whole. Through the person, the Earth organism has the capability of self-awareness. It was necessary to let the mind develop, despite hazards to the organism, to the point where it was in the realm of possibility to create a human society in which everyone's physical needs were met, and that could live in interdependent harmony. Now that this is possible, the Earth organism needs human cooperation. Thus, we hear the cry of the people who search for a different quality of life, who look beyond the industrial world. This is a cry coming from the living Earth herself, as thoughts and ideas come to us from deep in the past, all that was gathered in eons of life. All this is a part of us, of the life force flowing through us. (Roszak, 1979) Nature then is not so much something that humans must form a relationshp with. The relationship is already there--we only need to be still enough to find it.

CHAPTER III

LEARNING OF THE NATURAL WORLD

As a child, I remember watching "The Jetsons" every Saturday morning, right after "The Flintstones." (I always wondered if the TV people planned the contrast or if it was purely accidental.) George Jetson and his typical American family lived in the space age--complete with swishing rockets, instant food, and, of course, robots. Automation was king, in the guise of serving man's every need. I do recall being fascinated by all the new gizmoes and gadgets that appeared each week, but what struck me most about the show was that none of the people in it ever got to touch earth--they never walked on land! They were shuttled here and there; moving sidewalks carried them to where they wanted to go. They lived their lives without ever feeling the earth under their feet. Although the gadgets looked like fun, I remember wondering even then if the conveniences of such a life were worth the price of exile from the earth. On one episode, they planned a very special vacation, got special passports, made reservations, and went down to earth. All I can recall of that trip now are the green fields, lakes, streams, birds, and Judy, the teenage daughter's amazement that such a world existed. A little

far-fetched? Perhaps, yet there's an unmistakable taste of reality there. When was the last time you walked on the earth? Not on the concrete sidewalks or paved roads, shopping mall tiles or carpeting of your home, but actually walked on the earth? More and more people are taking trips "back to the earth," oftentimes requiring as much preparation as the Jetsons did.

There is no real question that our contact with the earth is diminishing. In most cases, our children will have far fewer encounters with nature than we did, who, in turn, have had far fewer than our parents. Experience is vital in the process of learning. There is a vast difference between reading about someplace and actually going there. There are subtleties in the experience that cannot be expressed in written word, as all the senses try to soak in what's around them. There's more involved than the richness of the full-person, sensory experience though.

Why Outdoor Experiences are Important

Our experiences, all of them, contribute to the way we see the world, and they make up the framework we use in dealing with new experiences. If a child's experiences are only with urban design and manmade thinking, this will influence the way he sees and acts toward himself, other people, and other environments. Many different experiences are needed to create a broad framework. Most of the experiences of children today are of a manmade source. While

many of these are valuable indeed, we must not overlook that the natural is qualitatively different from the manmade. Nature has things to teach that can come only from her, things that, as part of nature ourselves, concern us very deeply. In diversity lies stability. Our children need the chance to discover in nature all that she has to offer, and they cannot do this through a one-hour class period of textbook science. They need the experience of her multitude of forms, the opportunity to spend some time with her as with a new friend, to discover the things hidden by the preoccupied mind and the nonseeing stare, and to recognize that in nature which is also a part of them. As Nietzsche says,

> The woods, the rocks, the wind, the vultures, the flowers, the butterfly, the meads, the mountain slopes, must all speak to him in their own language, and then he must, as it were, come to know himself again in countless reflections and images, in a variegated round of changing visions; and in this way he will unconsciously and gradually feel the metaphysical unity of all things in the great image of nature, and at the same time, tranquilize his soul in the contemplation of endurance and necessity.
>
> (Kneller, 1971, p. 77)

Opportunities for Children

"On Their Own"

So what opportunities exist for our children to experience nature? Probably the one of most significance is the "nature" that the child finds on his own. Fortunately, she is quite persistent, and manages to sneak through cracks in our sidewalks, and holes in our screen doors. And the

child seems to always notice even her most inconspicuous appearances, those that we, as adults, have long ago lost to narrowed vision. The child notices the patches of grass, sprouting up in the cracks, the raindrops engaged in a race down the windows, the smiling moon that seems to follow her wherever she goes, and this world fascinates her. For "the child is a born naturalist." (Olmstead, 1967, p. 480) The dandelions in the front lawn, the bugs that crawl around the windowsills have yet to become nuisances to the young child.

The young child often seeks out what nature he can find in his own yard, the neighbor's yard, or maybe an empty lot. Perhaps some of the endless fascination comes with nature's constantly changing character, her endless diversity, and interactions within her world. Things are never quite the same the next day if you look closely enough, as young children often do. And the excitement of children when the weather changes! The raindrops that send most of us inside seem to beg the children to come out and play. It's been a dreary, rainy day today, and as I look out the window, I see two children across the road playing in the drainage ditch that swelled with currents of rain water. They wade through it, first across, then upstream, then down, then up again. They toss in sticks, rocks, paper, anything they can find. They follow it downstream, sometimes pluck it out and start again. They're still outside at the same drainage ditch two hours later. Is it

"merely" play? Or are these children, without trying, learning something of the way the world works, of how if affects them, and of how they can affect it?

A not uncommon adult reaction to such a scene is, "Oh, the poor children--they need someplace better to play." So, in places that can afford to, they set up parks or playgrounds, areas designated by adults for play. These are oftentimes covered with concrete and sparse grass, with devices for the children to play on, but not really to play with--an environment made by people and controlled by people. Suddenly the element of fascination and intense involvement seems to disappear.

We're making it harder and harder for our children to be able to discover that small bit of nature on their own. Thoreau was concerned in his day that we were making the same mistake that people had made in Europe: they had totally civilized the land and then tried to recreate the wilderness they had destroyed. Thoreau suggested that each township reserve five hundred to one thousand acres of its land where nothing is to be touched. This park would be a place to learn, to play, to relax, to enjoy. Unfortunately, as our country grew, few areas took his advice. Now our children, especially those who live in urban and even suburban areas, rarely have a chance to experience nature in her more expansive form. Many of them have never seen the stars for the city lights, never seen a sunrise or sunset

for all the buildings, never been in a forest, never followed a stream to find out where it goes. Because there are some people who believe that such experiences are important for children, and because a lot of them weren't getting the chance at them, outdoor education came to be and exists today.

Outdoor Environmental Education

Outdoor education encompasses a colorful spectrum of programs and experiences. Each outdoor education center is unique, strongly influenced by the philosophy and goals of its director and by the people on staff. Yet intertwined with the individual personality of each center are goals and a philosophy basic to outdoor education. Outdoor education implies a certain approach to learning. Recognizing the child as an active, seeking learner, emphasis is placed on the element of discovery and the sensory qualities that abound in nature. It is also acknowledged that the child learns best from direct experiences. "Learning by doing" has long been one of the key concepts in outdoor education. Nature does not restrict her workings to one subject matter, even that of science. She offers us life in its entirety. In a sense, learning from her is interdisciplinary. We can find in her those elements that we relegate to art, math, physics, sociology, economics--all present at the same time, requiring just a slight change of perspective to see something entirely new. Outdoor educators are concerned with

children's getting a chance to experience a part of the world that many no longer have access to. Schools, libraries, sidewalks, parks and pools have replaced forests, fields, trails and lakes. Without the personal experiences with the natural world to refer to, learning about it from books or others may have very shallow meaning in that child's world. As Aldo Leopold said, "We grieve only for what we know." (1949, p. 52) Among the main goals of outdoor education are that children grow in their understanding and feeling for the world of nature, their place in it, and the importance of preserving it.

Camps are the typical setting. Not only do their back doors open onto nature's acres, but they offer a very special social environment. Just as important as the child's interaction with the natural world is her interaction with the human world. Camps involve intense group living. They are miniatures of larger society, with the same forces and dynamics. Only in camps, children are very much involved. Perhaps for the first time, the child is directly responsible for his own comfort and well-being. Difficulties and differences need to be worked out. It's a time for sharing, caring, growing together. The child comes face to face with trust, fear, responsibility, cooperation, and may begin to realize how his own well-being is directly related to other people. It's a time of discovery about the world, other people, and oneself.

The roots of outdoor education in this country can be traced back to three main influences: 1) children's camping, mainly intended for character building and recreational purposes, found as early as 1823; 2) the Nature Study movement, whose motto was "study nature, not books," introduced to this country in 1906; and 3) progressive education of Dewey and James, made popular in the 1940s. (Donaldson, 1982, p. 13) As far as the actual birth of outdoor education, the year was 1940, and there were two men working independently who are recognized as the founders--L. B. Sharp and Julian Smith. (Donaldson, 1982) From their pioneer programs grew school camping.

School camping, from the child's point of view, was a fun week at camp with her teacher and classmates. She helped plan the week along with her teacher and the camp staff. There was a lot of work involved--in fact, she and her classmates would do most of the day-to-day work that kept the camp going while they were there, but it was easy to see the purpose of their work. The day was made up of three large blocks of time, divided by meals.

From the teacher's perspective, the primary concern was for each child's personal and social growth. In 1947, L. B. Sharp said the

> primary emphasis should be given to helping the camper discover himself, his place in the group, his contribution to it, and understanding of how people live together. Skills should be valued only as the contribute to that aim.
>
> (Howie, 1972, p. 18)

As teacher, she would encourage exploration and discovery, emphasizing not the subject matter, but working on how to solve the problem. She did not forget that fun was a valid objective. Simply put, the experience was much more "campy" than "schooly." (Donaldson, 1982)

In the mid-50s, this all changed. With Sputnik in 1957 and the changes in the public school system, school camps became much more school-like. Many camps changed their names to reflect the academic component, and the term "outdoor education" came into use. The day was divided into class periods. The programs became more standardized. The children were there primarily to learn; it was just a special case where learning was "fun." In the earlier days of school camping, the cognitive, affective, psycho-motor all naturally blended. Now they were divided into periods. The holism and child-centered approach was lost to the forces guiding education and society as a whole at that time.

And what is the state of outdoor education today? Finding fuel in the environmental movement of the 1970s, many centers focus their activities around ecological concepts, exploring the forests and ponds, the life within, and how people enter this web of life. Another common emphasis is the discovery of our connections to the Earth, and how life has changed since the early days of our country. Pioneer-type skills are often included in the program. More

recently, activities designed to encourage cooperation and communication have emerged. There still remains a definite resemblance to the school in structure, with several activity periods a day, ending in some free time. After dinner is the time for traditional camp-type activities. Yet while the structure may be school-like, many centers really live the philosophy they proclaim.

The basics of outdoor education

Direct experience

Direct experience is elemental in outdoor education. This is rather easy to imagine when the pond is full of frogs, snails, and algae, but if you're trying to experience pioneer life... One camp offered a Pioneer Living program to third graders who'd come out for one day in the fall and one day in the spring. They'd spend it at a one-hundred-year-old cabin, where, in groups of about eight, they'd take an active part in the "chores" for the day, including bread baking, chopping wood, candlemaking, spinning and dying wool and others. My first day in the program, I soon discovered that merely providing activities for them to do wasn't enough. While the children were excited at first, they became bored and disinterested as the day went on. They found other ways to amuse themselves, such as pulling up the grass during candlemaking, or a quick game of tag on the way to the smoke oven. Not only were they generally disinterested, but it was becoming difficult to insure safety. The day started with

"You can call us Ma and Sis, and for today, you're going to be our family. We're going back in time to 1859..." Although we started out with a fantasy that excited the children, we later realized that we had dropped the role early in the day. In a desperate attempt to retain order, we had switched to the teacher role. With this, the children's orientation changed from active to passive. As the teachers presented, instead of lived, the lives of pioneers, the children, too, gave up their roles as pioneer children. What had started out as an experience quickly changed into a lesson.

For the next day, we decided to work with the seven-year-olds' love of fantasy and make-believe, and his egocentricity. The result was a consistent, intense play situation. All the physical settings were used to help the children "make believe" pioneer times. The roles of Ma and Sis were integrated into the design. Real concentration was needed, at first, not to slip out of these and become "the teacher." Everything that came up was accounted for in terms of the fantasy--explaining how Pa was out hunting, that Peter, the neighbor, brought the milk, and why Sis wasn't married. It was the goal to give the children one day to live a pioneer's life, not only to learn about it. To do this, everything was closely examined, even small details in the manner of presentation. The present tense was used rather than the conditional--"Now we have to..." instead of "A pioneer would have..." The focus was not on the lives of

pioneers, but on the lives of these "pioneer children." Spinning wool was no longer a presentation of how pioneers made yarn; it became, "What! You're eight years old, and you don't know how to spin yet? Well, it's time for your first lesson!" Wood chopping no longer focused on the pioneers' uses of wood, but rather, "You children better get that morning chopping done, or we won't be able to bake this bread for lunch."

Such play does encourage more activity on the part of the child, both physically and mentally, which can build such momentum that it soon gets out of hand. It's at this point that it's easiest to break the spell of the fantasy. For an effective, continuous experience, all elements must be worked into the world of make-believe. Proving to be amazingly successful was, "Ma's going to be very angry if anyone goes through the windows." and Sis's comment, "I don't run around here anymore since I tripped on the plow last spring. I couldn't do chores for a week!" The children showed much greater interest and participation this second day as pioneer living became a real experience for them.

With sixth graders, a direct experience doesn't involve a world of fantasy, at least not in the same sense as the seven-year-olds knew it. These twelve-year-olds take a twenty-minute walk back to a log cabin where two people actually live throughout the year. Any sort of museum or make-believe atmosphere is gone. This is real life.

Fascinated by two people who lived without heating, plumbing, or electricity, the children were full of questions, the first one usually being--"You mean you actually live here? Where's your real house?" Once convinced of the homesteaders' authenticity, the children seemed more eager to listen to them. There was no complete list of pioneer activities, such as bread baking, wood chopping, spinning, etc., prepared especially for the children. Rather they were asked to help with whatever real chores had to be done that day, whether removing rocks from the fields so they could be plowed or carrying rails to build a higher fence since the deer were eating a large portion of the garden. This activity, which exposed the child to new ideas and a different way of life, opened the door to endless fantasies of pioneer life in her mind.

Active methods

Outdoor education also places great importance on active methods, seeing the child as an active searcher in the learning process, rather than a passive observer. The mere fact that most of the learning takes place outdoors does not necessitate this approach. Traditional methods are easily converted to the outdoors in the "follow me, gather 'round" approach. As Van Matre says, not until "show and tell" becomes "share and do" does outdoor education really come into being. (1972) One approach to studying trees is to go for a nature walk in which the instructor identifies all the different trees and points out their various characteristics.

The children, at least those near the front of the line, may pick up a few names. A different approach is to take the children to a wooded area where they find a special tree to "adopt." They then spend the rest of the time getting to know "their" tree--they may give it a name, smell it, feel it, see how it is different from the other trees, draw a picture of it, write a poem or story about it, and on and on. It's not hard to guess which child will have a more lasting expression of tree study, whose ideas of trees may have changed, who might look at trees through different eyes.

When the child becomes actively involved, there's a better chance that the experience will take on a personal meaning. His emotions may come into play. I can't count the number of children who became attached to their trees, and hated to say good-bye. But in some cases, emotions may already be present, and they may be strong, negative ones. How do you get a child actively involved in an activity he may have dreaded coming to? This was too often the case with " akes." It is very important to first estimate fow fearful the children are of snakes. This will help determine the approach used and how much desensitization is needed. One successful method is to encourage the children, while seated in a tight circle, to talk about their personal experiences with snakes, how they feel about them, why people are afraid of them, and reasons for not being afraid. After a brief movie on snakes, Ralph, a small garter snake is introduced to

the children. He is passed around the circle from child to child, who usually examines him in great detail. They are not at all inhibited to express their feelings or discoveries, and an exciting discussion is usually underway in minutes. Comments show a shift in attitude and understanding. "You know if they (snakes) had arms and legs and feet, I bet people wouldn't be so afraid of them." "They're just so beautiful with all these colors and scales that they look like they're from another planet." For many, it was their first direct experience with a snake. As one girl wrote, "I loved the snakes! It was the first time I ever held a snake. I also liked it because it was interesting to watch them and see what they would do." From their experiences with snakes, attitude and behavior changes are evident in most children. One girl wrote, "I was afraid of snakes until I held one." And from another, "Snakes were really neat because I never new [sic] a snake before and I allways [sic] thought that they were really icky but now I learned about them and I really like snakes a lot." Because of their direct contact with a snake, Ralph became an important part of the children's stay at camp.

It's also possible to use active methods and direct experience in working with concepts. Take the predator/prey relationship for example. "Animals in Fall" is an activity that carefully weaves fantasy into the structure of a child's game. If you observe children, especially ten- to twelve-year-olds, you'll be struck by the dead seriousness with

which they take their games. There are definitely predetermined rules and consequences if these rules are broken, constituting a reality for the child as true as home or school. So the fantasy of being an animal was put into the child's framework of games. In this outdoor game, the children are given vests with animals' names on them, and literally become that animal for the remainder of the game. After a discussion of what an animal would have to do to stay alive, the rules of the game were explained. In order to "win," one has to find food, a mate, and stay alive. If a predator tags you, you're dead and have to follow him. If you're a predator, you can only kill one prey, and it has to be your own, i.e., a hawk can't kill a deer. Boundaries are set at the edges of five acres of dense pines, and the game is terminated when the teacher yells "Alle, alle in come free!" True to nature, there is no free spot or goal where you can run to be safe. So, a "rabbit" must find his food, stay away from "foxes," and tag another "rabbit" to mate. This game is based on several ecological concepts: predator/prey relationships, food chains, niches, camouflage, overpopulation, extinction, to name a few. These concepts are not stressed, nor perhaps even mentioned by name. The child first needs an experience that he can draw upon. In this case, he must experience "being an animal" before he can fully understand such abstract concepts. It's very hard to see the world from an animal's perspective, even for most adults. Yet, there's

something about crawling around on your hands and knees under low pines, freezing when you hear a branch snap behind you, and wondering in fear if it's your predator or your mate. Even if just for a brief moment, the experience of "being" an animal, for most children, is real enough.

> I liked Animals in Fall because we got to learn how other animals live in fall and how hard the preys [sic] life is. It was lots of fun.
>
> It was neat how you pretended to be animals. Being chased by pretatures [sic] and finding food, finding shelter was very hard. But I finally found it just about five minutes before you called us in.
>
> It was a real effort trying not to get caught.
>
> It was fun and I know how the animals felt.
>
> Animals in Fall was the second best thing I did, because it helped me learn that forest animals have hard work to do.
>
> It would be terible to be an animal. You'd have to live in a world of constant fear.

Whether or not the children all attain this perspective, just being completely alone in the woods for up to half an hour was an experience that most of them never had before.

All these activities, Pioneer Life, Adopt-a-Tree, Snakes, Animals in Fall, involve not only direct experience and active methods, but a certain amount of play and imagination often severely attacked as not constituting real learning, and making light of something (education) very serious and truthful. Lately, it has been proposed that it is the ability to fantasize that should not be taken lightly. It appears it is directly related to originality, flexibility

and creativity in the individual. (Pulaski, 1971) And, according to Piaget, an integration of fantasy into the learning process results in an overall broadening of the intelligence. (Pulaski, 1971)

Another common element of the activities described is the personal involvement of the child. It is not only the child's cognitive abilities that are called upon to understand snakes, or trees, but the whole child, including her feelings, thoughts and actions. "It is not half so important to know as to feel," says Rachel Carson. (Van Matre, 1972, p.73) Emotions and feelings become intricately entwined with intellectual learning, especially in the natural environment, and must not be ignored. The Snakes activity, for example, might have been disastrous if the children had been immediately presented with the experience of handling the snake. Prior discussion was necessary to let out their feelings and have them accepted, and give them a chance to examine them a little more objectively. "Snakes are icky" is a common emotional framework, which deserves just as much attention as any cognitive structure. An experience is needed that will contradict this concept. Then it may become permeable enough to allow for further discoveries about snakes. Or else, all incoming information may, in a sense, be blocked by the concept "snakes are icky." An exploration and evaluation of feelings can set the stage, so to speak, for further cognitive learning. Maybe this is what Van Matre means when he

says,

> Do not mistake our emphasis upon feeling for a lack of concern with knowing. We believe the latter follows the former.
>
> (1972, p. 73)

Feeling and knowing go hand in hand, each contributing to the other. The greater one's feelings for something, the more he's inclined to want to learn about it; the more he learns about it, the deeper his feelings grow.

While the world of nature offers countless objects to be discovered by the young explorer, discovery learning also involves the discovery of the ways of nature. On a walk through a coniferous forest to a beech grove, we tried to differentiate between various kinds of trees by using our senses, describing differences in tree barks, feeling the shapes and textures of leaves with our eyes closed, etc. We talked a while about the climax forest and how it differs from the pine forest. By the time we were ready to leave, the children had the concepts of deciduous and coniferous forests clear. We reached a point in the forest where both oak and pine trees were growing together. When I pointed this out to the children, they were totally confused at first. Then, ideas and explanations started coming. We worked on this "problem" together, until we decided that some trees were "moving in on others," so to speak. The children had "discovered" succession.

This brings up an issue in outdoor education--the

value of naming. Almost everytime you go for a walk through the woods with a group of children, someone will ask constantly, "What's this? What's that? What's this called?..." And, more often than not the name is soon forgotten and the object is not given a second glance. For it is a commonly held belief that once you name something, you know it. (Postman and Weingartner, 1969) Also by knowing the names of things, you can gain a sense of power and control. Once you name something, you classify it, put it into a category and "see" it no more. It takes on all the characteristics that we assign to that name. But,

> behind naming, beneath words, is something else. An existence named unnamed and unnameable. We give the grass a name, and the earth a name. We say grass and earth are separate. We know this because we can pull the grass free of the earth and see its separate roots--but when grass is free, it dies. We say the inarticulate have no souls . . . But in a moment that which is behind naming makes itself known . . . Air knows grass knows water knows mud knows beetle knows frost knows sunlight knows the shape of the earth knows death knows not dying. And all this knowledge is in the souls of everything, behind naming, before speaking, beneath words.
>
> (Griffin, 1978, p. 190)

By focusing on the names, we fail to notice the unnameable. However, there's a bit of a double bind--true, once we name something we tend to see the categories, the names, and not the things themselves, but oftentimes, our eyes see only what we have previously named. When a child is walking through a forest with her group, what she "sees" is determined by how much she knows of trees. If her only appropriate concept is

"trees," then her perception is limited to just an awareness of trees. If, however, her knowledge is more specific, say she has some knowledge of a coniferous or deciduous forest, or of oaks, maples, hornbeams... Then her perception of the forest will be more detailed and precise.

> Perception moves in on and is arrested at a level of precision that is predetermined by the concepts we bring to bear, concepts cast mainly in language . . . We "see" the cognitive framework that the sensory experience calls up in our mind. We see the framework and we see with it.
>
> (Hammerman and Hammerman, 1973, p. 120)

Yet the child needs more than just different categories to place objects into. She needs to make contact with them. In part of the forest activity, the children were encouraged to discover differences in trees by using all their senses. Some barks were smoother than others, some trees grew straighter, some still had their leaves on... We did not stop at sensory perceptions, but went on to name the various trees. Whether or not the names are retained is irrelevant. The true goal is that when one of these children, while walking through a forest, discovers another beech, the concept called to mind is not merely "beech," but "the tree with the greyish bark that looks like elephant legs and the leaves that stay on the tree early into winter." This is the experience the child had with the tree. She is doing her own naming--creating her own categories, definitions, organizations--which puts her into an intimate, living relationship with that tree, as well as empowers her. It is

not only important that the child has experiences and learns to notice the differences, but also the similarities. All trees are different, yet at the same time, trees are also the same. And they are connected to everything else, including her! They have a place in the world.

Involvement with others

Just as important for the child as experiences with the natural world are experiences with people, experiences where the child comes to believe in herself and in others, where cooperation, communication, risk-taking enter her life as real experiences. As one girl said of camp, "Instead of having my thoughts in my mind, I learned to give my thoughts." The environment of camp living itself provides endless opportunities for this to happen, especially if the camp staff believes it as an important goal and is consistent with it in their approach. Sometimes activities are planned to set the stage for increased interaction among the children.

During a cook-out, the children find themselves in a situation of frustration, exasperation, and possible failure, where communication and cooperation are the only means to a successful meal. Some find it very hard to see any educational value in a cook-out, thinking only of the skills required. True, it does teach how to build a fire and cook outdoors, but more importantly, it is invaluable as a social learning experience. To decide on the menu, the children offer suggestions which are then voted on. They are given

the necessary safety rules and some basic information on fire building. Broken down into groups of seven or eight, they are given firesites, then for the most part, are left on their own to build, start, and keep the fire going, and to prepare and cook the meal. The only stipulation on internal structuring is that the girls build the fire and the boys cook the meal. This is to insure a relatively new experience, and to further the need for verbal communication. The specifics, they must decide on and carry out on their own. If someone fails to gather wood, and thus the fire goes out, the consequence is very real to the entire group. In essence, the cook-out is a group project in which the end result, their lunch, is very relevant to each member of the group. While a feeling of success and accomplishment is usually evident afterwards, a follow-up discussion helps the children reflect on their actions and feelings during that time. "How could you have worked better with your group? Who in your group did the most to help? What did he/she do? Did you have your feelings hurt at all? When? Did you ever hurt anyone else?" Questions such as these lead into a discussion on what is needed to make such an event successful, and what each child can do.

Another activity that centers on group communication and cooperation is the Drop-off Hike. Once instructed in basic map and compass skills, the children are driven, blindfolded, three to five miles from camp where they are dropped

off in small groups. It is their responsibility, as a group, to get back to camp. One adult is with them for safety reasons, yet in no way is to help them find their way back. This puts the children in the position of having to make decisions, and being able to justify them when challenged. This is not an easy task. Once, we walked back and forth three times on the same road for a hundred-yard stretch, before the children would come to any firm decision. At a time like this, they have to be willing to argue what they believe is right, because the consequences of walking two to three miles out of their way is too real and high a price to pay. Another time at a difficult intersection, five of six children wanted to go left, while the other one was sure they should go right. After ten minutes of discussing, arguing, thinking, and indecision, he was able to convince the other five, by using the map and compass, to go right.

The Drop-off Hike is an activity whose secondary purpose is to teach the use of map and compass. Primarily, it's a true-life situation that demands true cooperation and communication on the part of each child. As one child later said, "It tested our cooperation with each other... I think cooperation is good because without it, you can't get hardly anything done." The hike also offers an opportunity to make discoveries about the world of nature. Encouraged to point out things that interested them, we were often stopping every few minutes to examine something, carrying on casual

discussions about cattails, farm life, differences between city and country life, pollution... One might say our topics covered such areas as biology, sociology, chemistry. When asked to sum up the hike, one girl said,

> From the Drop-off Hike I learned to use a map and compass, how to cooperate and say what I think to other people, how much my feet hurt after 2½ miles, and what a salamander felt like.

Also evident is a sense of personal accomplishment and self-worth, a "we did it" attitude. "The Drop-off Hike was fun. I liked it cause we were on our own." "We got to find our way back by ourselves." The Drop-off Hike is an unforgettable experience for many of the children, one that requires physical, mental, and emotional efforts. Walking down the road to camp after three hours of deliberation and confrontation, one boy turned to me and said, "You know, when I get home and tell people that I walked 4½ miles they'll say, 'Oh, that's easy!' but they won't really know what it's like until they do it." Herein lies the essence of experimental learning: you don't really know until you do it.

One more activity designed to build cooperation, communication, and trust is called Initiative Tests, or Challenge Games. The children participate in several short activities which may focus on one or more of these key concepts. Again, the children are presented with a physical task requiring completion, such as getting their whole group up on a boulder, or over a ten-foot high wooden beam, or out of a human knot. Trust is involved since it's a sort of

prerequisite to successful cooperation. We often use the word, but many of us have never really experienced it. For that reason, several exercises such as the Trust Walk (one person leads a blindfolded friend through the woods) or the Trust Fall (one person falls backward off something three-to-four feet high and is caught by friends) focus on drawing out this feeling. All these "tests" are looked upon as a sort of puzzle by the children, with an "easy solution." What they usually come to understand is that the key to their success depends on how well they worked together. As one girl expressed it,

> I liked the initiative tests because everyone works together and you have to trust the other people in your group. We had to try the initiation tests two times because the first time the last person couldn't get over the log. The second time around we all got over the log because Brian and Sean got on top of the log and helped everyone over.

It is not only in these activities, but doing their whole stay at the camp that the children encounter experiences that put the responsibility on their shoulders. At one staff meeting, we decided that the dining hall was far too noisy and unruly, and that some change of approach must be considered. After several suggestions, we settled on letting the children make up their own dining hall rules and be responsible for carrying them out. So at the first Monday lunch, a staff member sat at each table, described the process and acted as secretary. A list of rules was collected from each table, along with suggestions for what should be done if someone

breaks the rules. It was very interesting that the children, having little experience in handling discipline themselves, often had a hard time coming up with feasible suggestions. What this method did was switch the approach from imposed rules which had no rhyme or reason for many children to rules suggested by the children and later voted on by them. The responsibility was shifted over to them.

Although the camp setting is ideal for the use of active methods, traditional ones are often prevalent, and need to be recognized and carefully examined. This change in dining hall procedure was yet another step toward discovery learning even though it didn't involve a classroom situation. It was found that children are capable of and take pride in doing many things themselves that adults automatically do for them. As Piaget says,

> The educational importance of mutual respect and of the methods found on the spontaneous social organization of the children among themselves is precisely to permit them to work out a discipline where the necessity is discovered in action itself, instead of being received ready-made before being able to be understood. And this is why the active methods give an equally invaluable service in ethical education as in the education of the mind.
>
> (1973, p. 121)

Not only do children take pride in assuming new responsibilities, but in doing things that they see as purposeful. In a bread baking activity, the children grind the wheat to make the flour they need, and gather the eggs early in the morning. Rather than watching the instructo

demonstrate, each child makes his own loaf. The bread is then baked and served that evening for dinner. There is a certain glow of pride when a basket of bread, still warm from the over, is brought to the table. It was easy to tell which children had made bread that day. Being whole wheat, and a new experience for most of them, it was those who had a part in creating it that were most anxious to try it. Although many were not so courageous the first day, by the end of the week, when everyone had had their try at bread baking, the bread baskets were the first things to arrive back in the kitchen for second helpings. Not only was this a new experience for most of the children, but they were able to supply the camp with all the bread it needed for the week (and then some) with over 120 campers per meal.

The need for consistency
in an outdoor education experience

Most centers are very concerned with seeing that their philosophies guide the life at camp, that they make it down to everyday realities. To do this well, the staff needs to keep one eye constantly open for observing and evaluating. They cannot let themselves fall into the trap of the routine lesson. Each activity, each moment, each child is new and fresh and offers deeper insight. Nor can they let themselves focus so heavily on the activities that they forget the time in between. The child does not stop learning when the activity is over. In fact, as with the hidden curriculum, this

may be where some of the most important learning takes place. No matter how we try to segment it, their stay at camp is a whole experience, made up of many individual activities, many of which occur outside "activity time." Here, too, the observant, evaluative eye of the staff is needed to create consistency in the child's stay.

One person who puts a high value on consistency in camp is Steve Van Matre. His program, Sunship Earth, has a carefully planned out internal structure that is based on two goals--to help the child 1) come to feel her place in the universe, and 2) develop a sense of the interrelationships of everything on the earth, and to have this understanding as a check on all her further actions. (Van Matre, 1972) Seven of the most basic ecological concepts were chosen and almost everything imaginable done at camp supports these themes. Signs in the cabins label energy flow through pipes and wires, diagrams show what happens after the toilet is flushed. At mealtimes, the waste is collected, weighed, and charted for the week. Menus may be drawn up to represent the food chain. Campfires are kept small, using limited fuel. On the last evening, all the themes are tied together in an Indian legend.

Throughout the week, the child is called upon to use all of his senses and emotions, in addition to reasoning and thinking, to learn how the world functions. The approach is a bit theatrical at times, and I wonder with such a complete

program if there is room for input from the children. It appears to be of a one-way, rather than interactional, design. A child may sense its contrivance and that her part in it is already predetermined. There's a certain irony in being told what to discover. Yet, in actuality, it may not appear as contrived as it does in print, for Van Matre is very aware of the importance of a close relationship between the camper and counselor, and every opportunity is given for this to develop. The counselor has activities, quiet times, small campfires, and shares a cabin with a small group of campers. She, in effect, shares life with those campers during their stay.

What I find perhaps most valuable in Van Matre's work is the concern for consistency--the attention paid to all the little details that make up the camp experience as a whole. Yet consistency does not imply constancy, an unalterable program, a routine--where the goal soon becomes carrying out the program. It involves staff who are continually observing, challenging, asking "What is it that's really happening here?", communicating, and trying out new ideas. For, to follow nature's example, life at camp, too, must be always changing, growing, perhaps dying and being reborn, but it can never remain the same.

Second wave influence in outdoor education

Not all centers, however, operate on the principles of flexibility and internal growth. There are some that have

incorporated not only the structure of the school day into their program, but the philosophy of the school as well. These are centers with class periods, bells, worksheets, sometimes even tests, where the information the children need to know is selected by the teachers and presented to the children as isolated facts to be remembered. There is often a highly developed system of rules, with one of the key objectives being to maintain order and control. Sometimes, the reasons for the rules aren't even clear to the staff, but are enforced to keep things from "getting out of hand." It seems at this point that it's a matter of perspective. The excitement that the children have upon coming to camp is a tremendous energy source that staff could use to plug into, rather than try to suppress it through countless restrictions. The children come to camp eager to learn and often end up disinterested, bored, or withdrawn when they face the same climate and expectations that they left at school. At one such center, I observed one teacher, who appeared to be tired of constantly struggling for control, announce to his group that there would be no farm lesson that afternoon. Amidst applause and cheering, he told them to leave their notebooks and pencils there (requirements for all lessons), that they'd just go have fun at the farm. While they slopped the pigs (part of the standard lesson), questions and comments came flying from all directions. "Hey, they're all crowding for the food. Look! The big one's getting most of

it." "Why do they use their noses like that?" "Listen to the noise they're making!" Watching the pigs for fifteen minutes, they succeeded in uncovering more about pigs than the usual tour guide presentation method provided. Ditto with rolling in the hayloft ("This stuff's real picky!" "Look, some of it's hollow and some of it isn't. How come?"), checking out the silos, the horse stables, the feed lot. When the time was up, one child came running back to the lodge, all bubbly, "We didn't have a lesson! We learned a lot, but we had fun, too!" And the teacher was just as excited about it all as the children were, laughing and joking with the children and the staff for the rest of the day.

What is usually the case in such centers is that rather structured lesson plans are used for each activity--to insure standardization, and all children learning the same thing, and also to make it easier on the teacher. It's much less threatening to memorize a blurb on forests to present at the appropriate time than to wander through the forest with eight inquisitive minds, seeking to understand. It's a lot more comforting to those who fear lack of order to know exactly where they are going, what they will see, and what they will say. Yet in real outdoor education, this is never the case. The teacher cannot rely on mere facts she learned at school, but must rework everything she knows to come to her own understanding of the world. The difference may be

whether to use lesson plans to be followed to the letter or as possible paths, depending on what the children are already picking up on in the environment.

I was presenting one of these lessons, Pond Study, following the format of "discussing" origin, succession, etc., when I suddenly noticed that the children were more interested in the pond than they were in listening to me. They seemed to care more about the toads hopping wildly around than about an explanation of pH! Well, pond study turned out to be toad study. No herpetologist could have asked for a more ideal setting. Right at the height of the short mating season, the pond edges were swarming with masses of toads. The children learned to tell the males from the females by their front feet, observed their preference for sunlight or shade, warmer or cooler water, muddy or rocky bottoms. They scared up a frog and were amazed at the differences. They spent the whole period just observing and were still engrossed when the time was up. Several asked if they couldn't come back after dinner.

In sticking strictly to a lesson plan, one often loses the "teachable moment." I can't count the number of times I heard "No comments about the horse manure, please. This is field study." or "We're going to the quarry to study the rocks and look for fossils. I don't want you near the frogs in the pond there." Such centers still use outdoor education key words: interdisciplinary approach, discovery

learning, active methods. But while examples of these may occur, they do not provide the driving force for these camps for they are in direct conflict with the often overriding influence of the school. In centers where these outdoor education methods have been sold out to the easiest, most profitable way, and attitudes get mere lip-service, children may still learn despite the program, just by having some contact with nature and managing to fit in what personal experiences they can.

The flow of outdoor education into the third wave

There is an increasing need for children to have experiences with the natural world that lead them to feel that personal contact with the earth. Outdoor education is a valuable means to this end, most especially through centers that express the traditional outdoor education philosophy not merely in their pamphlet, but through every action, every spoken word. Outdoor education could play an important balancing role in the future; it is in the unique position of having both the potential and the roots to encourage the growth of the whole child. In traditional education, it is the development of logical, linear, objective, analytical thought that is stressed, through reading, writing, math, talking, all left-hemisphere functions. The right hemisphere of the brain, the seat of intuitive, holistic, subjective, imaginative thought expressed in dreams, fantasies, art and

emotions is dramatically neglected. It's now being found, however, that the right brain plays an essential part in healthful living. Creative people have been found to be more independent and relaxed, and less bored, violent, and aggressive. (Staley, 1980) Also, the right brain plays an important part in learning, even if it's a typical "left brain" activity. (Staley, 1980) What is needed is not a swing to supremacy of the right hemisphere, but an integration of the two. Outdoor education has the promise to help make this happen: the child first experiences, senses, feels (right hemisphere) then thinks about, verbalizes, makes sense of her discoveries (left hemisphere). This is the ideal of outdoor education. However, the trend that many centers have followed in the past decade and a half is increasingly left-brain dominated. It's the science and the math that have taken the front row in outdoor education programs, not because this is the pure essence of nature, but because they fit in best with our standard methods: they're easiest to define, categorize, and measure.

Despite such outdoor educators, the field has still been valuable for the development of both hemispheres. No matter how hard they may try to keep the viewpoint purely scientific and objective, the mystical and magical just catch your spirit in the out-of-doors. As Samples, one of the leaders in the field of hemispheric brain research, says,

> With the crashing waves of order and logic . . . it is only fitting that there is a world that cannot be measured, a world of mind that resists being counted, and one that slips in and out of focus so subtly that we almost forget it (is) there.
>
> (Staley, 1980, p. 63)

Outdoor education offers exposure to this world more intimately in some cases than in others. It also offers its own methodology, less formal than what the children get in school. As such it can allow the children more freedom to use their preference--the music, art, movement of the right brain, the graphs, writing, discussion of the left brain, or a blending of poetry and story-telling. (Staley, 1980) This provides an excellent opportunity for the observant teacher to better understand each child and how he thinks. With their left-brain emphasis, traditional schools set up an environment too confining for those children who favor the right hemisphere, and too familiar and unchallenging for those inclined to the left hemisphere. (Staley, 1980) Outdoor education can provide situations that both favor a child's preference, and also stimulate her to use the other hemisphere more. In stimulating the right hemisphere with the richness of nature, her textures, sights and sounds, and the feelings stirred up inside the child, the left hemisphere is called upon to think on these things and oftentimes to express them.

> The richest source of metaphor is nature . . . and . . . if there is to be survival, the realms of nature, its cyclical time, its metaphoric reservoirs, and its mind in humans must be resurrected.
>
> (Staley, 1980, p. 30)

Whether this dichotomy is seen in terms of left/right hemispheres, male/female ways, Western/Eastern thought, Toffler's Second Wave/Third Wave, Industrial/Romantic ideas, it is in essence a dichotomy in which one half dominates over the other at present. Rather than a pendulum swing, we are seeking a synergy, not a blending of the two, but an active balance, and we can find the ceaseless example of this in nature.

Outdoor education not only has the potential to promote holistic thought and perception within the individual, but also to let the child begin to grasp an even larger whole. The more the child learns from nature, the wider his scope of vision becomes, the more he can relate one thing to others and the greater his sense of the interrelationship of all things. As Lois Goodrich says, "The greatest need is still for breadth of education--individuals who can pull together knowledge from a wide variety of fields and integrate it in one mind." (1981, p. 7) Also, the more the child observes nature, the more she may become aware of similar stirrings in her, and begin to feel a part of this world, rather than apart from it.

In addition to providing direct experiences with the natural world, outdoor education is also in the position to put the child in immediate contact with his peers and instructors. The exciting, challenging world of true human interaction is within its philosophy and methods, and needs

only to be realized. The group living situation sets the stage for understanding what cooperation, community, and caring are all about. It fosters both a sense of independence, and a sense of belonging. Opportunities for decision-making and responsibility-taking are so tangible. It gives the child a chance to develop new depths in relationships with peers through shared experiences--to see points of view, values, actions different from her own, to see the options and possibilities that exist.

Integrity in outdoor education

Outdoor education holds such potential for the child, yet for this to become actuality, centers must first make certain that their philosophies and methods are more than attention-getting slogans. They must be tightly woven into the fabric of camps. They must look hard to see if they really are child-centered, rather than subject-centered. If chaos reigns in the dining hall, maybe it's time to look at the setup. If children are pulling up grass, doodling in the sand, playing with sticks, maybe it's time to look at the activity. Maybe it's time to ask what sort of experience you can provide for 130 kids in two-and-one-half days with six instructors, and to seriously consider alternative structures. The child neds the time and the opportunity to form personal relationships with her instructor, with her peers and with the world around her. Working with a group of eighteen children for two hours, then moving on to another group just

won't do it. Small groups with the time to get to know one another are essential. Being in a passive position of receiving information and rules makes it difficult for the child to gain the experience he needs to work as part of a group and relate to others as equals. He needs the chance to express himself, to communicate, to disagree, to figure things out on his own. Following the teacher on a path through the woods, watching the heels of the person in front of him, and looking at the things the teacher points out may not do much for developing a feeling and understanding of the outdoors. Time and freedom to sense, to explore, to investigate a little further what has caught one's eye, maybe within a small group, needs to be included in activities. If the child is to discover nature's way, she needs to have some time, perhaps alone, with nature. A time without goals or objectives, a time for Kuan, for nonseeking. To do all this, we need to humanize outdoor education, to remember its roots in school camping, its holistic approach to learning about life. We need to be able to step back a bit and observe what it is we are doing, and then be flexible and creative enough to make outdoor education what it could be.

When outdoor education emerged from school camping, it turned on to a different path, marked by an ecological focus and a more phenomenal split of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor functions. An expectation also became planted in the child that there were certain things that had

to be learned there. In diverging so from school camping, outdoor education left some things behind, mainly the total living philosophy--where the lessons of life are learned through living them. When outdoor education shifted the weight toward the outside world of nature, the balance was lost with the inside world of the child. The personal, or subjective, learning that occurred spontaneously during school camp was overridden with a more information-transmitted approach. The priorities were shifted away from group living skills and self-awareness. Much of the thrill and adventure was lost as outdoor education began to resemble schools. Whether to fill this lack or due to other factors in society, many programs began to spring up that seemed based on those components discarded by outdoor education. This relatively new field is known as adventure education.

Adventure Education

Adventure education, like outdoor education, is not a specific program, but rather a process, a way of looking at learning and life. While adventure is sometimes a component in outdoor education, as in the drop-off hike, it does not receive top billing the way it does in adventure education. Adventure education builds its programs with such elements as stress, challenge, discovery, an unfamiliar environment, and group involvement. Teenagers on up are its usual participants, and experiential learning is the method. While this is the core of adventure education, it extends along individual

interpretations and applications, remaining "nebulous and far ranging in its philosophy, values and methods." (Emerson, et al., 1981, p. 1) It is a true challenge in the field to "define the philosophical assumptions that are held without denying the inherent mystery of the process." (Emerson, et al., 1981, p. 1) While the focus of outdoor education is external (the natural world and people around us), adventure education uses the direct experiences with the external world and moves inward, often focusing on the self-discovery and growth of the participant. Adventure education places a great value on each individual's experience and his personal learning from it. It is also concerned that the experiences involve the whole person, with an intensity not found in everyday life. This is usually accomplished by placing the individual in a new and unfamiliar environment, commonly wilderness, by presenting challenges that create stress, such as rock climbing, rappelling, day-to-day living with nine other people, that call upon all the resources of the individual and of the group. It is hoped that in the process the individual will make discoveries about himself, test his limits, rely on himself, trust others, find himself in situations that require real effort, cooperation, sharing, supporting, helping, experiences that will help him find answers to "How shall we work together? How shall we live with our fellowman?"

So what are the roots of adventure education? Why

has it come to be? As a form of experiential education, adventure education attempts to broaden the spectrum of learning. Not believing that traditional education touches upon all the potentialities of human growth and development, adventure education concerns itself with some of the areas not reached by the schools. It also places the individual on a different route to learning. Throughout history, until the advent of universal formal schooling, the traditional mode of learning was through interactions with the people and things that made up one's daily life. In this context, learning was not a preparation for life--learning was life. Learning, living, experiencing were so intertwined as to the indistinguishable one from the other. (Emerson, et al., 1981) Experiential education reopens the door to this way of viewing one's life.

Particular to adventure education are certain elements that have become rare in our society. One of these is adventure itself. Adventure--the excitement and thrill of venturing into the unknown, the unpredictable, perhaps the dangerous, having to push yourself, to call on reserves of strength and imagination you didn't even know you had. Certainly this doesn't describe our everyday lives--the routine, the predictability, the certainty in which we live. Yet, at one time, adventure was a large part of peoples' worlds, perhaps not always on the grand scale we imagine it, but in the smaller things that make up each day of life. Adventure

is linked with challenges, trying, intensity, proving one's self, excitement, thrills. It has a magical, mysterious quality--all this so important to the human spirit. Yet where can we find it? Adventure has become something to read about or watch someone else do. It's a common theme throughout literature, from The Odyssey and The Iliad to Huckleberry Finn. Films express it in the lives of spies and space explorers. Yet observing adventure and living adventure are two very different things. Where can people of today, especially our youth, find this socially acceptable adventure? Adventure that they themselves experience firsthand? It's hard to come by, and many never find it.

Another element of adventure education is a focus inward, of using each individual's experience as a starting point to explore inward and learn more about one's self. The amount of conscious attention that this is given varies with each program; yet it is inherent to some degree in the very process of adventure education.

Because adventure education is relatively new to the field of education, and a rather novel newcomer at that, it has generated several misconceptions. Perhaps one of the most prevalent is that such programs consist solely of and for perilous moments spent dangling at the end of a rope or being swept down a raging river clutching to a small raft, or inching one's way through dark caverns. While adventure is vital to adventure education, it is just a component, a part

of the whole, certainly not the entire focus, nor the reason behind adventure education. The experience of the climbing or the rafting or whatever is just one aspect of the term adventure. It's the steppingstone for another adventure--the discovery of one's self.

When only the sensational aspects are acknowledged, adventure education can bear a strong resemblance to military training. Out front are the rigorous, physically demanding tasks imposed on the individual, testing strength and endurance. What's missing from the picture is the tone. Adventure education is based on the growth, not the demeaning, of the individual, on a feeling of success, not necessarily in completing the task, but in trying one's best. And hopefully, in adventure education, the driving force comes from within, not from above. The role of the drill sergeant may be easy for some to fall into in adventure education, yet most instructors are very aware and sensitive to this tendency. Their's is not to impose hardships, but to present challenges and to help the individual find the inner strength to face them.

Also related to the sensationalist frame of reference is the belief that the skills taught are isolated and not relevant to modern life. How often will you be called upon to scale a cliff, to go three days without food, or even to build a fire? What's involved is more than the Boy Scouts' motto--Always be prepared. Actually, it's not really the

skills themselves that are so important. What's at heart is a growing view of one's self as a competent individual, someone who is capable of being self-sufficient, who feels she has some say in her life, someone who believes she can learn whatever skills are needed to cope with any situation. The objectives of many programs don't even include the teaching of the more technical skills. The energy is not put into teaching the student how to set up a climb, but into teaching the basic skills necessary to experience it, then focusing on the experience. This is not to say that there aren't programs that emphasize skill acquisition, but these are usually taken by people who already have experience in the field and want to get more involved and/or to explore more on their own.

"But isn't it dangerous to climb mountains and rapel cliffs? I could get hurt, even killed!" Yet there's a possibility of this, remote as it seems, every day of our lives: driving to and from work, working around the house, though we rarely dwell on it. The risks involved in adenture education may be greater, which doesn't mean don't take them, but they call for greater care and planning before the activity, and a constant alertness during its course. This is the greatest responsibility of the instructor: to insure a safe environment, both physically and mentally, for all participants. A casual, part-time attitude won't do. Neither will guessing or a slip-shod approach. Safety precautions must be set up

and followed religiously. Conscientiousness and good judgment are vital in any instructor.

At Pretty Lake Adventure Center, the instructor checks weather conditions, walks through the ropes courses, checking ropes, knots, trees, for anything amiss, removes any dead fallen branches over the course, the campsites, the trails, and does an inch-by-inch inspection of all equipment, not just once a month or once a week, but everyday before taking any group through the course. According to Lee Snooks, the director of the center, "Nothing can be assumed or taken for granted." (Snooks & Knerr, undated, p. 12) Hopefully, the students learn from the instructor's approach --our "aim" is to teach that the more adventurous the undertaking, the more care and prudence are called for it to succeed." (Emerson, et al., 1981, unnumbered)

So while the activities appear dangerous, a distinction must be made between "apparent" and "real" danger. (Whittaker, 1981) A fraction of real danger does exist, as it does no matter what we are doing. We can never have total control. However, we, as instructors, can minimize the danger by realistically sizing up the situation, bringing into play our knowledge of the environment and our perception of the limits of the group and the individual, and by acting on what we find. "Apparent" danger makes up the bulk of adventure activities. No matter how safe you know you are, the feeling of danger remains. You can "know" the safety

cable running above you is secure, you are clipped to it with two safety ropes, you would fall maybe one foot at most before being caught by the ropes and your harness; still, walking a twelve-foot log lashed between two trees forty feet off the ground simply terrifies most people. Which is part of the reason why adventure education can do what it does. By allowing people to take risks in a safe environment, they have the chance to try out new responses, to experiment, to face fear, and it is from here that the learning starts to happen.

Another misconception is that it is the purpose of adventure education to pit man against nature. While nature does provide some challenging situations, the student may soon find that it is not so much a matter of overcoming nature as his own fears, preconceptions, and pre-set limits. The real battle involved in a climb of sixty feet in the freezing rain may not be so much against the elements as against one's desires to turn back, to call it quits. After spending some prolonged time in close contact with nature, you begin to realize how absurd the whole idea of overcoming nature is. Much as you'd like to see the rain stop after three-and-one-half days of being wet and cold, this is a little beyond your control. What is in your power is to use all your imaginative, creative wisdom and foresight to make the best out of the situation.

It's also a common belief that adventure education

always takes place in the wilderness. While this is usually the case, it is not necessarily so. What is needed is a novel, unfamiliar environment. Some programs find that the urban environment or foreign countries also make excellent settings. But given our way of life today, it's a fairly safe assumption that the wilderness is a new experience for most people.

The programs based on adventure education are as individual as the resources, values, and goals of their founders. Outward Bound is perhaps the prototype of adventure-based programs, at least in this country. Several schools, located in various parts of the country, offer programs that are based on their natural settings and slightly different emphasis. The guiding philosophy of all, though, is experiential learning. Through vital interactions with the physical environment and others in the group, the student will hopefully grow in understanding of himself and his world. To achieve this, Outward Bound is extreme, intense, confrontive. It seeks to agitate, incite, animate. It does this partly through stressful activities--rock climbing, rappelling, sailing--the image of danger and daring that most people have of Outward Bound. While a vital component, they are just one element in the process of the development of self-awareness, self-esteem, and acceptance of others. It's the student's facing the situation, mastering it, and thinking it through afterwards that affects self-concept. The activities are

tools in this process. Oftentimes we credit the learning and teaching with the activities, "rather than seeing that it is the artistry with which a tool is utilized in any environment whether it is the wilderness or the classroom." (Emerson, et al., 1981, unnumbered)

While the artistry is a highly personal quality, Outward Bound instructors do need a certain level of skill to insure a safe and positive learning environment. A key element in the process, the instructor is a translator, an initiator, a model. Oftentimes, there's more there than meets the eye. The level of stress must be kept not too high, not too low. The instructor must be very aware of the limits of the group and of the individuals. Activities are carefully planned and sequenced. The design, with sensitivity on the part of the instructor and effort on the part of the student, is to succeed. Despite, or perhaps because of, its success, Outward Bound recognizes that its model, like any model, must retain an element of flexibility and not become something set in stone. (Emerson, et al., 1981) A fluid, ever-evolving process, with an openness to self-awareness and development, it, too, remains "outward bound."

In 1973, the Battle Creek Public Schools initiated a somewhat radical program in an attempt to alleviate racial tensions in secondary schools. BACSTOP, which involved high stress adventure activities, outdoor group living, and wilderness trips, was begun. Because of the program,

relationships between black and white students improved. They found separation trends reversed, violence between blacks and whites reduced, and a much higher level of interracial tolerance. While the Battle Creek Outdoor Education Center retains some of the elements of the program, many of the ideas were worked through and expanded at Pretty Lake Adenture Center.

Pretty Lake offers adventure experiences mostly for school groups--sixth grade classes with their teachers. Although high stress activities--ropes courses, initiatives, climbing walls--are elemental, again, they are just one part in the process. The aspect of outdoor group living is considered by the instructors as the most important activitiy. As with adventure education in general, the starting point is the learner in a new and stressful situation. The focus is on the here and now, the situation at hand, and once acted upon, to reflect, clarify, generalize. One thing that's stressed at Pretty Lake is the expectation that participants will try their very best, maybe try harder than they've ever had to before. And for many children, that's the case.

Gary paralyzed on the flea jump. He stood on the small platform forty feet up in the pines, unable to hop, flea style, to a similar platform on the next tree, three feet away. Although he said he trusted his safety line, he wouldn't move. The fear running through him was seen on his face, and in his shaking arms and legs. The children on the

ground were encouraging him on, saying that they'd been scared, too. This didn't seem to help. Mike, the instructor, talked to Gary and told him that no one could know exactly the way he was feeling up there. He also pointed out that Gary was really trying, you could feel his effort, he really wanted to make it across. Mike asked Gary to think for a minute of how he felt when faced with walking the log a few minutes before, and also of how he felt when he reached the platform at the end. And just to remember that he did do it. Still fearful and shaking, after half an hour of talking with Mike and his friends, Gary jumped across.

The idea of the ropes course and other high-stress activities is to elicit fear. Along with fear, the student is encouraged to find the trust: trust in the instructor, friends, the equipment, and most importantly, in himself. Through meeting and dealing with that fear, self-confidence grows. As one girl later said, "It was great! I found out that even if I'm really afraid, I can do it anyway." In order to take that risk, and succeed, it's important to have a safe environment, a sensitive and aware instructor, a supportive group, and real effort on the part of the child.

A supportive group doesn't always occur naturally. Some elements of the program can help build this spirit. Spotting--a group of four or five being ready to catch someone's fall off low equipment--is not merely functional, but sets the tone of cooperation, caring, and community.

Sometimes children would like to help, but really don't know how. As Sarah's classmates watch her try to climb a forty-foot wall with small one-inch blocks nailed randomly on it for footholds and handholds, some laugh when she misses a block, others are silent, others are talking loudly among themselves. The instructor here needs to work with the group: to focus their attention on Sarah, "Think for a minute? Is your laughter going to help Sarah?" "If you were up there, how would you feel? What would help you?" "Check with Sarah--see how she's feeling." "She says she can't find anywhere for her left foot. Can you see a move she could make? Sometimes it's easier to spot them from the ground." Again, the instructor does not "teach," but acts as an initiator, a clarifier, a mirror. The instructor also "provides supportive, safe and nonjudgemental permission for trying beyond one's expectations." (Knerr and Snooks, undated, p. 65)

The group can also play a large role in the ever-ongoing formation of the self-concept. Assumptions made about peoples' capabilities and natures are often inaccurate, and may be put to the test in such activities. One group initiative is to get the entire group up and over a ten-foot high log between two trees. The rules state that two people may stay up on top, and once you're over, you can't come back to the other side to help. One group automatically put their two "strongest" people, Donald and James, on top. After many

attempts, no one could get over the log. A suggestion came to try someone else on top of the log. After looking more carefully at the members of their group, Ken and Dawn were picked, and were able to get everyone over. In the follow-up discussion, it was brought out that because they weren't thought of as "strong," "aggressive," or "leaders," Ken and Dawn were overlooked in the initial choice. Yet they had no trouble with the task. The activities at Pretty Lake often lead the children to see themselves, and their classmates, in a different light. More supportive of themselves and their peers, they have at least one vivid experience in their history where they were scared, where it wasn't easy, but where they tried hard and gave it their best. And that, not getting to the end of the course or the top of the wall, is success.

One concern of most adventure educators is their impact on the environment. The majority of programs are designed for the natural or wilderness setting. Yet the Earth can't take this wear and tear as well as concrete or asphalt. Constructing and running ropes courses are bound to do some damage to the environment. Snooks and Knerr call upon all to "aggressively limit the impact." (undated, p. 3) Carefully choose the site, looking for such things as good run-off, and a clear enough spot so no cutting is needed. Use ground cover to prevent erosion. And move the whole site periodically to give the old spot a chance to recover.

In addition to being personally aware of environmental impact and conscientiously minimizing it, it is vital to foster the growth of a wilderness ethic among participants. For as wilderness use goes up, actual wilderness goes down. As more and more people enter the wilderness and perhaps return again to it, the more damage they do to it, even unintentionally. They end up destroying the very thing they set out to find. Outward Bound, very concerned with generating such a wilderness ethic, practices no-trace, low-impact camping. Campsites are chosen that have minimal impact; the group moves on after a day or two to make it easier for the area to recover. Stoves are used most of the time; if a fire is built, the ashes are scattered so no fire scar remains. The goal is to have the students become aware, then concerned and knowledgeable about their impact on the environment. It is hoped they will "pass through silently, leaving as little trace as sunlight through wind." (Sevenson, 1981, p. 1)

How is this accomplished? Through the example and strong conviction of the instructor, through discussions, and through living this very consistent, careful lifestyle during the course. On a similar trip, the students were taking time to clean up any firescars they'd see along the way, and pack out all litter they found, even if it increased their pack weight considerably. It is the responsibility of adventure educators not only to provide a safe environment for their students, but to see to it that it becomes a two-way

interaction, that the Earth receives the care and respect that she deserves.

Why is the wilderness the setting for so many adventure education programs? There are several qualities of the wilderness that make it especially compatible to adventure education. In the wilderness, living is brought back to the basics. Stripped of all the extraneous fillers of modern day life, people are faced with having to take care of their basic needs. All of a sudden, staying warm and dry, having a place to sleep, eating a meal, and moving from one place to another become the focus of life. No longer taken for granted, these acts involve attention, effort, and time. And accomplishing them yields a real sense of satisfaction and pride. For it is easy to see that what you're doing is essential to your living--a feeling that often escapes us in everyday life.

Through such self-sufficiency in fulfilling basic needs, wilderness living often plants the seed that you do have some control over your life. This insight can be important. Robert Dorsett (1979) points out that people with an internal locus of control are generally less anxious, more adaptive, and productive, and learn more than people who feel they have no control over their lives. Yet a trend of our times is that more and more people feel that their lives are beyond their control. (Dorsett, 1979) One valuable outcome from adventure education would be to allow them to experience

otherwise.

The wilderness provides a unique setting in that it acts back. The consequences of our actions are clear, immediate, and hard to deny. If you're too tired to tie the food up well at night and more than half of it is eaten by nocturnal creatures, you, and the group, may be hungry for the rest of the trip. If you leave your cooking equipment scattered because of a late dinner, you may wake up to find it covered with a foot of snow. Nature throws responsibility squarely in our laps. And it is in living with her that a sort of common sense develops. Through direct contact with the forces of nature, we may become more aware of our actions. We may dwell more on sizing up the situation, the possibilities, the consequences. As Aldo Leopold says of two youth on a wilderness adventure,

> The wilderness gave them their first taste of those rewards and penalties for wise and foolish acts which every woodsman faces daily, but against which civilization has built a thousand buffers.
>
> (1970, p. 120)

The wilderness setting may not only give us a chance to explore our own actions and their consequences with the natural world, but with the social world as well. In the wilderness, we are quickly stripped of the facades and buffers we've constructed in society. Such masks just don't hold up; you can't hide inside your body when living with a small group of people twenty-four hours a day in an environment that demands everything you've got, and then some.

Roles we take on, that come to identify us, are tested for validity. As La Bastille says,

> The wilderness may be the only place where barriers can be dropped between men and women, for in the wilderness each organism is mutually dependent upon all the other organisms within the system . . . The wilderness may be the only place where a woman can immediately be on equal footing with men.
>
> (1980, p. 154)

So along with the feeling of self-sufficiency, a lesson soon learned is you can't make it on your own. The small group and the tasks implicit in wilderness living bring interactions to a personal, workable level. You can't get away with behaviors that slide by in the "big" world. You may not even have been aware of them, let alone their effect on others. Not only do you have the chance to really look at yourself, but to do this in a supportive, safe group, one that will confront you and demand honesty, but hopefully one that cares. What results is often a new outlook on one's self and one's way of being in the world. As Heidi, a sixteen-year-old, sang after a two-week trip to the Rockies, "The mountains have shown us our reflections; Now we see the world with eyes that care."

What is it about the wilderness that inspires such reflections? That's impossible to pinpoint, or maybe I just wouldn't want to. The wilderness is not just a novel environment, it is the environment of the origin. Not only the physicality around us, but something deep within us. Simply put by Anne La Bastille, the wilderness is "not only a

physical entity, but a state of mind." (1980, p. 3) In the wilderness we find the mysterious, the primordial, the timeless. With a glimpse at what's at the base of life, our present world is often seen in a new light and our own lives thrown into perspective. Values are examined; lifestyles challenged. Perhaps with a new clarity we will ask "What is important?", "What is it that matters?", "For what ends shall we live?"

Adventure education, like outdoor education, is more of an orientation, an approach, than a specific program or content area. It seeks to complement, or balance, the more traditional learning by providing experiences in which the student must get personally involved, must interact. It is a wholeness in the education of the child that is being sought. As an approach, adventure education can become an element in many settings, one becoming increasingly recognized is summer camps.

Summer Camp

Summer camp is a unique setting. In some ways, it resembles the atmosphere of the school camps of the 1940s. Learning does occur, but it is rarely an objective. At camp, learning is life; living is learning. There is no separation or distinction. What is learned is not forced or even conscious learning. In such a new physical and social environment, free from pressures "to learn," the child encounters ideas that conflict with his own, discoveries that challenge

his established thought, and some sense must be made of all this. Also summer camp not only offers the experience of a new environment, but an experience that can last anywhere from two weeks to two months. Such time allows for continuity and depth not seen in two-and-a-half days or even one-week trips. Time to become familiar with new faces, the trail to the cabin, "your" horse, the contours of the lake bottom, the feeling of your warm sleeping bag. Time for feelings to grow. Feelings that, like learning, make up living at camp.

Camp is a unique, rich environment in that it involves every part of the child. Something about camp sparks the child. The emotional, physical, social, thinking are all awakened, not one at a time, each in its turn, but as a choreographed whole, each movement affecting the other, as is life. And all this happens without anyone trying to make it so. For still the main reason children go to camp is "to have fun" and still the primary requirement for ccunselors is "to love children and the outdoors."

Being such a special setting, it's easy to get excited about the "potential" of summer camp. There can be a real danger in this, as oftentimes in the striving, we lose the very thing we seek. The danger in summer camps is that in maximizing its potential, our objectives, goals and expectations for the child and her development may settle in on the camp like a heavy fog. The atmosphere of the camp then

changes radically. What was once one of the places truly for children is now a place of adults' standards. By transforming it into a "learning experience," external pressures come into being, and fun becomes secondary. Not to say that change is negative, but to be aware in making any "improvement," to keep an eye on the child.

Even more varied than outdoor education or adventure education centers, each summer camp is its own. Many of us can remember the summer camps of our childhoods: days filled with swimming lessons, volleyball games, nature crafts, horseback riding, nature hikes, nights of campfires, Indian tales, roasted marshallows, and whispers in the dark after the counselors were asleep. For many of us, it was the first time away from home alone. The countless unfamiliar names and faces of the first day soon became like family, and camp life moved into full swing. The traditional summer camp, a blending of group living, new skills, the outdoors, with the main ingredient of fun, still exists today. However, some camps, attracted to certain ideas and values, may take on a certain focus, making each one a little different from the rest.

Pleasant Valley Outdoor Center, 460 acres of black, deep prairie soil, the rich farmland of Northern Illinois, always had a close tie with the Earth as the source of life. One of its programs, Farm Camp, focused in on this fundamental relationship between people and the Earth. Farm Camp,

a two-week residential program for seven- and eight-year-olds, had its home base in the midst of the farmyard. And for the summer, the regular farm crew stepped aside, as the children and counselors took on the running of the farm. This meant early hours, the roosters crowed at dawn, and the sun became a natural alarm clock. The children broke up into small groups, and, with a counselor, took care of the animals: feeding the goats, cows and pigs, letting the draft horses into the field, gathering the eggs and bringing them to the group making breakfast. It makes it very hard to ignore where breakfast came from, when you had to reach under a warm, bothered hen and take the egg from her. To fix dinner, the children took a walk down to the vegetable garden and picked what they needed--"Wow! Look at this plant! It's taller than me! Hey, it's a corn-on-the-cob plant!" "You mean all carrots grow under the ground?" "A baby pumpkin!" They also weeded or harvested for the rest of the camp--a sanctioned time to play in the dirt. "My mom'd yell at me if I got this dirty at home!" This direct contact with the Earth and her plants and animals was central to the program, for these were entirely new experiences for most of these Chicagoan children.

The contact was important in and of itself; it was also a link in understanding how we, too, are nourished by, and need, the Earth. "I thought we get milk from cows. Why don't we get milk from Cleo?" was a favorite question. "Cleo

is a black angus, and that kind of cow gives better meat than she does milk. Tomorrow we'll take a walk down to Mr. Swanson's and see some dairy, or milking, cows." We'd have to leave by 5:30 A.M. to make it down to Swanson's farm for the morning milking. At once, the children noticed the difference. "Oooh--it stinks here!" "There are so many cows!" But it was a chance to see the milk come right from the cow to the bucket to the milk vat where it stayed for a day or so until the man from the dairy with the big truck came. Naturally, our next trip was to the dairy itself, where we watched the milk truck being pumped out, the cartons made and filled and sealed, and stored in a huge cold refrigerator that men could even drive trucks in. "This is the same milk we have at home!" one little boy exclaimed when he saw the carton. "And I met the cow it came from this morning!"

"But what about Cleo? What happens to her?" the children wanted to know. So we pile in the van and head to the meat-packing plant. Many are horrified that the animal is really shot and has to die. But by seeing the process from a live cow to hamburger, many make a startling discovery. Their firm vows of strict vegetarianism usually last until the meat loaf for dinner, but for most, a farm is being seen in a new light. It's not just a place out in the country where animals live. It's a place where almost all our food comes from, even the food in the grocery stores. And it's a place that means some work.

Farm chores can be hard and tedious even for adults. While the children were at camp to have the experience of farm living, they were still there to have fun. In order for them to do both, much on the farm was scaled down to their size to make it manageable. Smaller feeding buckets replaced the standard ones, milk crates handy so water pumps and high shelves could be reached, poles available to carry heavy things between two or more people. Even the hay was baled especially for Farm Camp, in a much smaller than standard size. It still required hard work and working together, but the children could now handle the chores, take responsibility for them, and succeed at them. They could actually take care of the farm, and feel proud about doing it.

In different parts of the camp, other programs were going on. In Tent Camp, ten-to-fourteen-year-olds found themselves without modern conveniences, and learned how to make do and live without them. How do you live if you don't have a house with electricity, a kitchen with a stove, refrigerator, sink, a bathroom with a flush toilet and tub, a bed to sleep in? Daily life was reduced to the basics, and this was the main focus for their stay at camp. What the children discovered is that they could do it, from what seemed like nothing, but in essence are the foundations for all life.

Another tie Pleasant Valley has long held is with the world of people. "Pleasant Valley is a microcosm of the

larger society," Fred Jackson, the director, would say. And at Pleasant Valley, small as it was, you could find the same elements of the larger world. This was mostly due to the rich diversity of the staff: black, white, Hispanic, women, men, muslims, Christians, Jews, people from Sweden, Spain, the Ivory Coast, Japan, teenagers in high school, a mother with her eleven children. Counselors from Kenilworth shared rooms with those from Jackson Park, students from Oberlin worked with those from Princeton. Difficulties arose; conflicts developed. And so often, they were reflections of the same problems that exist on a larger scale in the larger world. Yet within the community of Pleasant Valley, these problems ocurred on a personal level and could be handled as such. We weren't trying to solve the whole black/white unrest, but Tony's coming late for work and Mike's getting mad. From conflicts that were brought to the whole group, we could grow in understanding of other people and other ways. While working together was essential to the running of Pleasant Valley, it was the individual differences that were respected, celebrated, and shared that gave the camp its atmosphere. The beat of Yusef's African drums heard on a hilltop when the working day was over, a glimpse of Howard's Tai Chi when the morning shadows were long, the sound of Hedda's wooden clogs on the gravel road--all a part of one unique person, and all creating a whole that is Pleasant Valley.

Another center with a different history and its own special focus is Circle Pines Center. A cooperative since 1938, Circle Pines grew out of the Asland Folk School (1882-1938) and summer programs of the Central States Cooperative League. People have long gathered at this rural Michigan setting to talk of peace and social justice, and to transform words into courses of action. And they return to it to find strength and support, new ideas and new life. While it retains its purpose and ideology, Circle Pines is ever-changing, ever-growing, in motion.

Living the cooperative philosophy, campers and staff share the daily tasks of the community. While some clean, some cook, some work in the garden, some repair roads, the camp is buzzing with life; you can feel its pulse. A total organism, it is still made up of individuals. And before anyone is a role--a camper, cook, director, counselor--she is first a person, an individual known in the community. And what a strong community it is! At Circle Pines the cooperative spirit seems to float on the wind--into the farmhouse where voices meet in song, into the kitchen where many hands and hearts are creating a wholesome meal, through the darkness into the rechall where hands are joined and the many move as one in favorite and familiar folk dances. It is carried into the pines where a group of campers and their counselors work together to move heavy, awkward tent platforms through narrow rows of pines--discussing, sharing,

experimenting, encouraging until the last one is in place. It slips into the cracks of the barn where the campers are rehearsing their adaptation of Godspell to life at Circle Pines:

> With nature's help we did it
> The proof is very plain
> If not in our harvest
> Just look at what we've gained
>
> We've proved to all who watch us
> How strong in peace we are
> Working together we've gained
> Treasures up to the stars
>
> And Treasures we'll take with us
> And share with all mankind
> The happiness inside us
> Our joyful, peaceful minds.

One specific program at Circle Pines is Youth Work Camp (YWC). The summer of 1982 brought together ten people; eight fifteen-, and sixteen-year-olds, and two counselors. The structure was four weeks at camp and two in the Colorado Rockies. The focus was on a work project for the camp, leadership development, and nature. What happened is quite beyond words. "Meeting as 10 unique individuals, we are becoming one family." (M.B., July 10, 1982)

One among many remarkable transformations of the summer was the growth of ten people into a caring, sharing group. Not an easy or sure process, by any means. There were times of tears, hurt tears, bitter tears.

> It was the best of times, it was the worst of times. Last night was one of the hardest nights we've had all summer. Our meeting started out like any other, but when it ended, I think we were a lot closer . . .

> I felt like I had spilled out my guts; many of us were crying . . . So many things went on I can't explain.
>
> (A.L.)

There were times of joy, laughter, and singing. Times of hard work, requiring 110 percent effort, and the fatigue that follows. Times when things didn't go smoothly.

> I noticed when things don't go well, we get uptight, which is perfectly normal. However, one major thing we don't do is take it out on each other . . . If one of us realizes that the other is displacing his anger on someone in our group, we feel free to frankly tell them so.
>
> (M.B.)

But what guided this frankness and openness was true care and concern for the other person. Trust was being built in the rest of the group, not only to keep each other safe physically, as when rock climbing, but emotionally, in group meetings and through the day, as well. Trust in the unconditional love and acceptance of the group--maybe not of particular acti but always of the person. A true sense of family was emerging.

> It feels good to be here and we all seem very comfortable with each other. I feel constantly loved.
>
> (B.A.H.)

A sense of unity, of pride in being YWC, grew, but not in the direction of lording it over others. Feeling good about themselves, they had more energy to share. And despite the strong group identity, they did not lose their own. For each person contributed to the group and made it what it was. This came out at various times: when the group was fractured, A could reconnect it, when it was dragging, M could

rejuvenate it, when it was hurt, C and BA could soothe it.

Each person was recognized and valued.

> I love all the people that I have been with this summer, and I thank you all very much. WC is part of a big body. H is our legs because she carries a big part of our load, BA our hand, C our arm, M is our backbone, T is our feet, S and A is our brain, and I am the heart, C and J are the soul. I love you all.
>
> Love always, M.J.

Herein lies the essence, the "secret" of that YWC: the feelings of real love and care for each other that grew so strong and radiated through everyone in the group.

> At the end there was an all-camp hug and that was great!! I love YWC, I love everyone . . . it is going much too fast for me.
>
> (T.M.)

> Today went pretty good all in all, except for a few fights. I LUV EVERYONE SO MUCH.
>
> (S.S.)

> I LOVE YOU ALL. I love this group and all the life that's being shared and transmitted and LIVED.
>
> (H.W.)

As one of the counselors noticed:

> What I see that keeps this group together and working as a group is under everything a feeling of love and trust for each other. Not everyone in this group knows this and some of those that do, don't know why it's there but it all works just the same. We cooperate and struggle to work things out.
>
> (J.K.)

Another amazing transformation of the summer involved the growth of leadership in the members of the group. Arriving at camp a bit tense, apprenehsive, not quite knowing what

to expect and if they'd be able to do whatever it was, they grew into more confident individuals, leaders among the younger campers, and respected by the staff. Leadership was built into everyday life. There was a leader for the morning run, where some learned that leading meant more than just being out front. It meant being aware and in touch with the other runners--was the pace too fast? too slow? how was everyone feeling? One day each week, Youth Work Campers spent as "counselors" in another unit. Stressed from the first night that as the oldest campers, they were naturally looked up to by the younger children, their new position of role model was something to be taken quite seriously, and given some thought to. Through informal contact with other campers and their weekly "counselorships," Youth Work Campers found themselves to be leaders in the eyes of other campers, and lived up to that expectation, or it may in fact be the other way around.

Another vital element in leadership development was a leader of the group rotating daily who, in the beginning of the summer, was responsible for waking everyone up, seeing that any equipment needed for the day was ready, and getting any information or messages to the group. As the summer progressed, the daily leader took on more and more responsibilities until all the daily logistics, and more, were taken care of by the campers. Daily meetings were part of the program. At first, guided by the counselors, they reviewed

the day, any problems or successes, and planned for the next day. Backing out a bit, the counselors made sure the campers understood the givens--every day, five hours of work, a run, a meeting--and let them figure out the schedule. I saw them have to decide on priorities, like sleep, and work with the givens in a way that benefited them most. By the end of the summer, they were running their own meetings completely, with no need of counselors.

Important to the growth of Youth Work Campers as leaders was the careful structuring of the responsibilities they would take on. Following the Outward Bound philosophy, Youth Work Campers faced a progression of responsibilities, each building on the ones before, not only on the specific skills, but on the feeling of success. For success is crucial. To insure it as much as possible, the campers found they had a clear structure in which to work, and, perhaps difficult, but not impossible tasks along the way.

This developmental approach was used not only for the leadership component, but the wilderness adventure aspect unfolded in like manner. Getting in shape physically, running a little further or faster each day, swimming more laps, lifting more weights. Building leadership ability that will take on new meaning on the wilderness trip. A practice of running an overnight campout a half mile or so from camp. Once in the Rockies the developmental progression continued. A short hike the first day, a little longer the next, a peak

climb, a one-day solo, a final expedition. Each day building on the day before, on the strength and confidence that accompanies success.

It was around dinner at the practice run campout that the question came up, "Why go to the Rockies?" "I've never been there, and they're beautiful!" "To have fun." "To see them." "To push myself and see what I can do." As many answers as there were campers. And what did they find there? What did the wilderness open to them?

> The mountains are so dramatic and strong, and powerful. They are realism. Life seems very gentle and safe here (at Circle Pines). The place to grow or learn about yourself--those "depths"--is the mountains. They strip you of your outside protection--or ways that you protect your character and personality. Your true selves are shown there, and ours were.
>
> (H.W.)

For what ends shall we live?

> I hope we can follow our hearts and true feelings throughout our lives.
>
> (H.W.)

> 'That path is for your steps alone.' It really is, and I hope we all choose the path that makes us the most happy and satisfied.
>
> (M.B.)

The wilderness offered, and many campers saw. Ten days and nights living in the mountains, we felt the rain, the snow, the hail, the heat of the sun. We watched deer at dusk, trying to be as silent and still as they were, followed elk trails over mountain passes, sat perched on boulders waiting for the full moon to rise over the mountain's ridge. Ten

days and nights many of us met a new friend whose ways were different from our own, yet strangely familiar.

In the wilderness, too, was the thrill of adventure. Yet adventure is not exclusive to the exotic, unspoiled wilderness of nature. It does not confine itself to any specific place or dangerous activity; rather, it is a state of mind. As such, it can be found, in varying intensity, in everyday life. It is found in the unexpected, the unpredictable, in any new situation with an unsure outcome. It involves stress and some real effort from the individual. The adventure of a backpacking trip in the Rockies is easily imaginable, but adventure at a camp you've been coming to for six, seven, eight summers? Possible indeed and a special part of YWC. The adventure of being the first night of camp --ten people sleeping out with only ten ensolite pads and four sleeping bags, hoping against rain. The adventure of putting in the daily five hours of work by the light of the moon, while the rest of the camp sleeps, or waking up early to do most of it before breakfast. The adventure of taking on the project of siding a building when fairly unexperienced in carpentry skills. The adventure of pulling off creative, good-natured pranks, i.e., moving the entire dininghall setup in the still of the night to the front law, so an outdoor breakfast awaited much surprised campers. The adventure of the van breaking down just one more time along the way in Smalltown, Iowa. Adventure--a state of mind, animated by the

situation you find yourself in, or which may even be created by yourself or by another.

At camp it is the counselor who oftentimes creates such situations and sets the tone for the unit in general. And just what makes a "good" counselor? It is certainly not easy to put into words, nor is there any one secret formula. The unfolding of YWC seemed almost magical indeed. While the subtlety and graceful skill of the counselor leadership eludes definition and analysis, there were certain basic beliefs and elements of style that contributed to the way of the summer. From the first night on, expectations were set high--the expectations that all would try their best, give it all they had and 100 percent of the time. Not mere words, for the counselor was a living example of this creed: total commitment and total consistency. The high expectations placed on each individual and on the group as a whole were first placed on the counselors themselves. Consistency --not just at the farmhouse, or in the Rockies, or in this situation, but not that one. Consistency with the "non-negotiables"--those few, basic, clear, and nonnegotiable items. Consistency with the YWC agreement--the ethical, behavioral code agreed upon the first night by all members of the group. And underlying it all was the relationship between counselor and camper.

The relationship that grew was one of two subjects, who were individuals first before roles. As with commitment

and consistency, the counselor needs to take the first step and set the stage for a relationship of openness and trust. This involves taking a risk, and opening one's self to the campers, letting them see who you are, to create that trust that leads to true interaction. The counselor encouraged the campers to be themselves, to express themselves without fear of judgment. He saw, appreciated, and celebrated the individuality of each. And the campers knew it. They felt valued as competent individuals whose feelings, ideas, person were valuable and special. One camper wrote before leaving camp:

> . . . I probably haven't even realized everything that I've learned so far. You, and everyone else have helped me to find myself, you've reassured me and taught me to trust myself and my decisions. What more could anyone ask for? . . . I love asking questions, and you are very good at responding. You don't give me that funny look which says "Why are you asking this silly dumb question?" You just answer. It's great. It's so true. You didn't stereotype me as a "confused teenager" from the beginning like a lot of adults seem to do. You got to know me and you were open and straightforward with me.
>
> (B.A.H.)

I've written and rewritten this section, and I just can't get the words to come close to expressing the intensity and genuineness of life that summer. As one camper wrote,

> Can you put what we went through into words? For if you can, I would sure love to read it. I can barely think of it.

For the first week after camp was over, she lived in "an incredible dazed world."

> Absolutely nothing was registering in my mind, I could only think of all of us. For example, one day I crossed the street (fairly busy) without even looking either way,

> or seeing if it was my turn. These things didn't even occur to me. Thus a car slammed on its brakes three inches away from me. A middle aged man yelled out his window, "Blankety blank, Lady what the hell are you doing?" On a usual day this would have made me quite upset and embarrassed. He had no real effect on me. Seriously I must have said I was sorry, but I kept walking like nothing happened. To put it bluntly, everyone thought I was on some kind of heavy drug.
>
> (M.B.)

It was a summer of growth, of challenge, of change. I saw ten people begin to find answers to some of their questions, and discover that the questions are really endless. I watched them grow into leaders, of their peers, of younger campers, of themselves.

> At the beginning of the summer I was unsure of myself. I apologized a lot and felt badly when I did something wrong. I was also more timid to do something new for fear that I would mess up or do something wrong. Now I am a lot more sure of myself.
>
> (B.A.H.)

I saw ten people come together one early July day, and through the summer develop a closeness and caring for each other beyond any expectations.

> . . . that special love (of YWC) seems to have been something very unique, we had the openness of a family, the understanding of close friends, and the love of both.
>
> (B.A.H.)

I saw ten people each grow in their own way, while they were also growing together. I felt them sense that growth, revel in it, and support it in each other. And while the summer, and their time together, was past, a part of that life, a different part for each person, would continue on.

> There are so many shared experiences contained in this small part of Circle Pines, and in all of our hearts and minds. I don't think that any of us realized how much we would grow and share, and go through together. We have given each other so much, as a group and as individuals . . .
>
> Right now the log cabin is empty of our personal things --tangible things, and in the future it will fill with things of other people. Dozens and dozens of people. The emptiness now is one feeling. But if you look at each thing in this cabin as a whole and the area around here, it is full and rich with all that we have done and lived. So MUCH! Too much to try and explain to anyone. Our futures are ahead of us . . . It amazes me to think about 5 years from now--10 years. So much has happened in less than <u>one</u> year. I am truly looking forward to my life!
>
> (H.W.)

What I saw that summer were ten people who began to find their own answers, answers to "How shall we work together? How shall we live with our fellow man? How shall we play? For what ends shall we live?"

Summer camps and summer programs are becoming so varied that it's senseless to generalize them. The two centers detailed here share some traits that may be common to more camps in the future. Both Pleasant Valley and Circle Pines are flexible and adaptable in what they can offer as a camp, accommodating all age groups with a variety of programs. They are also both decentralized in structure, the focus on the small living group, counter to the "fast-food philosophy" (greatest number through in the least amount of time) of other centers. Even with the small, personal living groups, there is still the feeling of being part of a larger community, the camp. And finally, the way of both centers is

a process. Programs aren't perfected, then made permanent. Life at camp, the whole of camp, is ever-changing, ever-growing. It is organismic, following the way of the Earth.

Conclusion

According to Pearce (1980), it is during the first ten years or so that the child needs to develop a full, rich scheme of the world, and learn to interact with it. Many children are at a loss for experiences with the natural world, which though we may tend to forget it at times, is at the base of all life and to which we are inextricably tied.

> We forget that nature is, quite simply, the universal continuum, ourselves . . . included; it is that which mothered us into existence, which will outsurvive us . . . It is the mirror of our identity.
>
> (Roszak, 1973, p. 7)

It is this world our children must have a chance to come to know, with mind and heart. Opportunities exist through exploration on one's own, and through the structure of outdoor education, adventure education, and summer camp. Ideologies and methods vary tremendously among the three, and even considerably within each area. Some see this as confusion in the field. As a relatively new area, there isn't a standard creed, one set of unanimously accepted guidelines. Could this reflect a move away from standardization and centralization? Might these be incongruent with the very nature of the field? While some sort of unity or common ground may be desired, there is a certain richness in the diversity of

experiences open to children. It seems as if each has its place and function, to open doors to different areas, or for one to be able to strike a chord in a child where another one failed. Rather than limit, or try to pick out the best, the child's understanding may grow in depth and scope with each different experience with nature. As educators, we owe it to our children to give them nothing but the highest quality experiences.

CHAPTER IV

A SUMMER AS NATURALIST AT CIRCLE PINES CENTER

On the last Saturday in January, I got a call from Barbara, one of the co-directors at Circle Pines. I had already decided to spend another summer there, if it was at all possible, but didn't really want to work the same program. "How about the counselor-in-training (CIT) program?" she suggested. I'd had my eye on it since last summer and readily agreed, but that would only take up part of my time. "What else would you like to do here this summer?" she asked. As all the positions jumbled into my head, it suddenly occurred to me that I could be the naturalist. I must have screamed it at her over the phone, the idea got me so excited. Well, it was settled. I was CIT counselor/naturalist for the summer. After I hung up the phone, still high as a kite, it occurred to me, "What will I do as naturalist?" There had been no nature program the year before, so I had just been handed a clean slate. Fueled with that prospect, the ideas began squirming about, trying so hard to take shape. Ideas of specific activities emerged at the most unexpected times over the next five months, as all the energy of my subconscious seemed focused on the upcoming summer. But underlying it all, I found myself faced with the question, What is a naturalist? at a summer camp? and then, what was it most

important for me to do that summer? and given the Circle Pines environment, how could I do it?

All my role models of naturalists shared common characteristics: 1) they had a seemingly infinite knowledge of nature, especially of its names and properties, 2) they were always ready to impart this information to others, at a breakneck speed, 3) once in the natural environment, they seemed totally absorbed by it, oblivious to most everything else, and, of course, 4) they gave nature hikes. Thinking back on my own childhood camp experiences, I tried to remember the naturalist. The only memory I could dig up was of mid-morning nature hikes, an hour or two of walking in a long line down a narrow trail, staring at the tennis-shoed heels of the girl in front of me. Once in a while, I'd hear the naturalist yell out the name of a flower or a tree, but being so far back, I had no idea which one she was talking about. To tell the truth, I really didn't care, as the bugs were swarming around my head, biting my face and the back of my neck. All in all, they were not very pleasant memories, nor did I feel much fondness for that naturalist. I do remember feelings of frustration and boredom, and thinking "What a waste of time!" Recalling those old feelings, I made a vow then and there; no traditional nature hikes for me this summer! Hiking single file encourages narrowed vision, both of the eyes and of the mind. But if I cut out nature hikes, what is a naturalist to do? and even more fundamentally, just

what is the role of the naturalist?

The more I thought about it, the more I realized that what I was, and the image I wanted to portray was that of a naturist, a lover of nature, rather than a naturalist, in the common sense of the word. I wanted to have enough knowledge to be a resource person for those with questions of their own, and to be able to bring their attention to things that might interest them, but underneath it all, and what I really hoped to communicate, was a deep love of nature. In this love, I saw respect, caring, and an eagerness to be with her, listen to her, learn from her every day. I wanted to be someone at camp who people of all ages could always share nature with, someone they could tell their observations to, who'd get as excited as they were, someone to further explore and discover with. And for those preoccupied with their life in Chicago, or the fate of the world at large, or just things going on in their heads, I assumed the responsibility to awaken them to where they were, to animate them by opening their eyes, ears, noses, and minds to the world of nature encircling them.

Wednesday, June 29

> I'm feeling very inadequate, incompetent in my role. My idea of naturalist, and it seems like the rest of the staff's, are not at all the same. As naturalist, I'm expected to know the name of every tree, flower, insect, plant on the property, and that's about it. Paddy's doing an art project where the kids go out and draw what they see in nature, and I've been invited to go along to tell them what it is! I had planned, as naturalist, to take a "nature group" out to draw . . .

Anyway, it's getting time for me to make some sort of statement--I'm not sure how--maybe by reading after dinner? at sharing night? during the "acclimatization" activities I'm supposed to lead tomorrow with staff? Maybe I can really prepare for those. A visit to the nature center once it's finished? I need to say more of my ecological concerns for the camp--fires, firescars, toilet paper on work projects, etc.--but all I have to back it up is my value judgment, and that doesn't seem good enough for the people here.

From a nature point of view, this camp, for all its other progressive ideas, is very traditional. There's concern for the environment in a faddish sense--the "environment" that is being strip mined in Colorado or polluted off the West Coast--but as for the environment of Circle Pines, it's not really seen as "the environment," it's more like a back yard. I don't see many people here really investigating or observing or truly enjoying the small things in nature. They trod right on them all on their way out to the nature trail.

I see I have not only campers to open this world to, but staff as well. This may be the harder challenge. The children still have their sense of wonder and amazement and aren't all hung up in names and masking nature. They want to know their world in a practical sense, and interact with it, perhaps try out their power in it, but they do this at a very personal, involved, active level. It's truly an interaction, not a distanced naming and sorting.

You can take a walk through the forest with the intention of identifying trees, and incidentally, with truly seeing eyes, come to know the tree.

Or you can walk through a forest with the intention of getting to know trees with all the senses and incidentally pick up the name. Yet given that the incidental may never happen, I would much rather know the whole personality of the tree than merely its name.

Thinking back, it was more than a little foolish of me to assume that since I had finally straightened a few things out in my own mind about my role as naturalist, that the rest of the camp would automatically be of the same mind the minute I got there. It wasn't a conscious assumption by

any means, but I found myself frustrated and angry when they would ask me when I could do a nature hike with their unit, or when they looked appalled that I didn't know the name of the small brown bird that had just flitted across the field in front of us. At times I found myself feeling incompetent as naturalist, when time and again I couldn't answer their specific questions, and saw myself fail to live up to their expectations of a naturalist. When I would try to explain that naming wasn't high on my personal list of priorities, and I found nature hikes boring and a waste of time, the puzzlement and incomprehension grew stronger in their faces. "But if you don't key out plants and trees and do nature hikes, then what do you do?" they would ask. Good question.

Thursday, June 30 (staff orientation week)

> It was so great today to have the opportunity to expose staff to the nature program--through games! I wanted somehow to let them have as much fun with nature as little kids seem to have, so I grabbed at something sensory, active, and personal. In small groups, we first did a blindfold walk. In pairs, one person would wear the blindfold while the partner would lead him across a meadow, into some woods, stopping along the way to feel the ground, or seed pods, or flower petals, to small bark, or plants, or the road, to feel sunshine and shade, to hear the birds and the wind and the stillness. The group was so lifeless when they got to me; we had spent the morning going over safety rules and procedures. And they were a little apprehensive when I asked them to put blindfolds on. But once they did, and started exploring, talking increased, fast, excited talking with laughs and shrieks interspersed, and it was contagious, and so much fun.
>
> When we got to the woods, we played "hug-a-tree," where the blindfolded person was led to a particular tree that they got to know as best as they could without the help of sight. Then their partner took them away, spun them around, and challenged them to find "their" tree.

One pair was still there long after the third bell had rung for dinner. "Tell them to hold some plates for us!" he yelled to me. Then back to his partner, "It's gotta be here somewhere!"

Most people had some time left before dinner, and I invited them to wander around in the pines for a few minutes until they found a spot that looked comfortable. Then to take some time to sit down, or lie down, and forget about their worries and concerns for the summer, or the next thing on the schedule for orientation week, and to focus only on what was surrounding them, then and there. Chrissy came up to me after dinner and said, ". . . Oh, I needed that! I've been so busy in the kitchen that I forget what's so special about Circle Pines, and I really miss that. By the way, I was watching these two squirrels by my tree and . . ." The whole staff seemed to react that way! First step in showing that a naturalist can do more than lead nature hikes!

A first step indeed! Somehow I had figured that now they had to realize that my way was a little different and of course, understood it in great detail. Little did I realize what a slow, gradual process this change in view would be. And it would depend on how much contact I had with each and every person at camp.

Sunday, July 9

Frustration! I've got so many ideas for activities, and see so many changes in attitude possible, but I'm not reaching the people here. Why not?

1) No one comes to nature activities, so--
   - plan nature activites for other times--unit nights? get them interested early in the session!
   - be more visible, announcements at meals, maybe dinner announcements just like work projects do?
   - readings can be powerful--bedtime stories to all groups, after dinner readings
2) Nature has a dull, boring name for itself
3) It's easier to sit around
4) Adults aren't "formally" invited or aware. People can't be forced to do anything, but they can be enticed, have their curiosity picqued. How...?

One of the things I learned early on in the summer was what didn't work. And perhaps highest on the list was the scheduled afternoon "nature period." Now, I can see that it had just too much competition (i.e., arts and crafts, the lake, just hanging around with friends, etc.), plus it had a bad name for itself. It was so much easier, and more fun, to sneak in "nature" when people weren't expecting it.

Thursday, July 14

> Today was a day to go with the flow. The day was hot. The kids were hot. I was hot. Orienteering in an overgrown field was not my idea (or their's) of a lot of fun. So I asked them what they wanted to do. A few minutes of thought--then, "catch toads and frogs down by the lake!" So off we went with Golden Guides, coffee cans, and magnifying glasses. We stopped along the way to check out a dead mouse, and other assorted roadside attractions. Once at the lake, all three girls went crazy, seeing turtles, frogs, plants, spiders, moss. (Larissa has seen 126 daddy-long-legs since she's been here.)

Everything in nature, and here at Circle Pines, has a place. And not only a place, but a right to be here. That was my underlying premise, and the viewpoint I wanted to expose Circle Pines to. So the "official" nature policy on wild animals was, it best to leave them alone, since they were probably out just getting some food, or on their way home, and it's best not to disturb their day too much. But to deal with the urge in many small children (and adults) to collect and keep, we established a twenty-four-hour visitor policy. As long as you could keep your guest safe and comfortable, and not impinge unduly on his freedom, he could stay in the nature center for twenty-four hours, at which

time you agreed to take him back to where you found him, so he could continue on his way. This shifted the emphasis from simply catching, to taking on responsibility for, and caring for the critters. Preparation for the "guest room" could become quite elaborate and varied with each guest brought in. Once they had taken all this time, the children stayed around to make sure their guest liked it. A good deal of observing went on at this time. They would usually come back and check on him during the day, and were amazingly faithful to the twenty-four-hour limit, some right to the minute. I was hoping that the children were learning more than certain characteristics of the animals and insects they brought in, that they were also learning a caring, respectful attitude toward the life around them.

Saturday, July 16

I imagine this camp, being so aware of respect toward children and an attitude of cooperation would have an attitude toward nature along the same lines. When a beautiful luna moth remained on the doorframe of the farmhouse while all the children and staff wandered in and out for breakfast, I was heartened by all who noticed it and stopped. Then the director came up, took one look at it, and asked if we had a kill jar in the nature center. Amazed that we didn't, he thought we should get that right away. "Let's start a collection of all the insects found on the camp," he said as he walked through the doorway. Why? I wondered. Well, to learn about them of course! Is that how we learn of the campers here? Immobilize them, isolate them, objectify them? Why be inconsistent with our cooperative philosophy, our belief in interchange between equals, when it comes to the natural world around us? What is the "hidden curriculum" of a collection of insects? of a kill jar?

Sunday, July 17 (first day of second session)

A completely different complexion of this new group--an extra high energy level--will have to keep the ball rolling--the message didn't seem to get out last session. What to do differently this one?

- get more staff involved--include Jennifer and Erika in planning activities, getting and making materials, etc. use ideas, etc., of any other staff, work with them
- discuss with staff the activities of each day beforehand, so they can relay it to the kids
- make the nature center more of an active, discovery, "kid-owned" space
- be more visible as naturalist (meals, etc.)
- do activities at other times than afternoon
- get to know the kids as much as possible, and pick upon and follow their interests

Awareness → interest → participation/action → thinking and feeling

Preparation time is so important! There's a great amount of frustration in that I have knowledge to share, and the framework isn't there to do it in. I have to spend so much time and energy creating the structure, that there is little left to be with the kids.

Why can't ideas become a reality?

- time's needed to get things together
- this is a growing, developing place, you can do/have it all at once.

It seems like you have to do everything from scratch, reinvent the wheel, and by the time you get it all together, it's time to leave.

I'm still trying with the balance between openness and structure, between obligation and freedom of choice. How much can you give, offer? Where does what we say we do and believe differ from what really happens?

During the first session, I struggled with how to make "nature period" more appealing, how to get kids to go. But while this was still an issue in my mind, I began to let go of it and concentrate more on where else I could fit in.

Saturday, July 23

I've been reading Walk When the Moon Is Full as a bedtime story to the Acorns (the youngest campers) for two nights now. It's the story of two young children who one night ask their mother, "Will we have to go to bed every night until we are very old?" After seriously thinking about it, she decides no, and with the light of the full moon, they go out exploring. The book is an account of their twelve nights that year when they "walked when the moon was full." So tonight, with the full bright moon, I decided to take the Acorns on a moon walk, a whisper walk. We gathered in Acorn meadow as the stars began to peak through the evening sky, and the light of the full moon shone through the oak tree branches. We walked quietly down the path until we came to an open field, and the moon was in plain view. After gazing at it for a bit, we continued on. "Can you feel the air?" I asked. Christian immediately started waving his arms through the air, then tried to grasp it in his hands. "It feels...soft!" he exclaimed. "And moist. And warm. And smooth." "And it's making me feel drowsy," said Jamie, as we crossed the meadow. There was a familiar nighttime softness and heaviness in the meadow air that I had never put in those terms before, but when I did, they seemed to fit so perfectly.

We went through some woods and came to a small clearing where the moon shone through the trees, casting shadows into the woods. "Look at the shadows," whispered Eli, "but they're not from the sun. They're moon shadows!" "Do I have a moon shadow, too?" asked Josh.

We finally reached the lake, where the moon reflected on the calm water. The stars were more easily visible now, and the night was still. I pulled a pair of binoculars out of my knapsack and passed them around. When they got to Casey, he looked through them at the moon and said, "Dang, man!" He looked around some more, then he looked back at the moon, and exclaimed, "Dang, man!" one more time.

We walked back to the cabins, spotting the Big Dipper and the Milky Way on the way. The children gazed at the moon through the trees one last time before going into their cabins.

Sunday, July 24

Where else can you get up and make an announcement after dinner that the barn swallows nesting on the front porch have become upset, so could everyone please use the

side door--and they do! There's Jon M. and Jennifer and other staff who sit at the base of the old pine and watch them, children who try to sneak in for a closer look, only to get divebombed, and the concern is still going strong a week later!

I found short occasional mealtime announcements a good way to keep people reminded that there was an amazing world out there, and to help counselors plan with their kids. Meteor showers became a much anticipated event, and a counselor or two with a group of interested kids would often sleep out in the field for the nighttime show.

Monday, July 25

Amazing where "nature" makes its appearance around here. I had an amazing discussion with a Youthie and CIT today while clearing the fitness trail. In fact, we spent 3 hours talking about clearing vs. laissez-faire, dominance vs. cooperation. We talked of the National Park Service, of forest succession, climax forests, prairies, killing, clearing compared with strip mining, the irony of clearing nature to enjoy nature.

It is being able to involve nature like that--as it comes up--that is living and learning, and the holism so lacking in education, and so special about Circle Pines.

Tuesday, July 26

Another unplanned opportunity. Josh, the Acorn, was sitting on the picnic bench looking a little down (being on crutches with a sprained ankle). In talking to him, I learned that he was headed down to the nature center. Julie, his counselor, wanted a star book, and he had to meet her there. So I went down, too. And Walter came along. And the three of us spent an hour in the nature center, just examining the things there more carefully: the bird nests, Leroy the shiny bug (who was the current 24-hour guest), the deer jawbone, etc. It was a real relaxing, easy-paced time.

One thing I came to understand as the summer went by, and I saw what worked and what didn't, was that I really

didn't have to schedule a lot of things. I could just go ahead and do it. I had to keep reminding myself, though, to spend more of my time thinking and doing, rather than planning and scheduling.

Wednesday, July 27

What a joy to have Marion come give me a new report on the swallows (one more has appeared!) and to see how intently she, and others, are following along the growth of that family. There probably won't be a camper to leave here this summer who won't be able to recognize the swooping flight of the swallow, thanks to the cooperation in keeping the nest intact throughout the summer.

Thursday, July 28 (Peace Day)

A wonderful idea! Songs before meals, meals from countries where peace is most needed, a secret peace friend who you gave a small token or gift to during the day. And that night, we all gathered in Acorn meadow in a very large circle for an Indian peace ritual. Calling on the spirits of the East, West, North and South, we passed a seashell of burning sage, wafting it three times over our right shoulders. Deviating a bit from tradition, we all said what peace at Circle Pines means to us, and, using a wish stick, thought of ways to carry peace away from Circle Pines. As we fed our sticks to the fire Christian, an Acorn, turned to me, and said, "I wish I could just make things, put love on them, and give them to people."

Friday, July 29

Again I found "nature" waiting for me as I led another work project. I got to haul brush in the truck with Sidney, and later on, Doug. It was a windy, rainy day, threatening to storm at any instant. Most of the campers tried to find work inside, but Doug seemed invigorated by the crispness, the sharp smells and colors, and the instability of the weather. As for Sidney, he seemed rather obsessed with Gazumba and how it would scare him to walk down Youth Road. In Circle Pines' legend, Gazumba is an Indian spirit that inhabits one of the large, misshapen trees that overhangs the back road. Gazumba will see that no harm comes to you as long as you respect him, and what he represents. Well, Sidney and I talked for a while on the legend of Gazumba, and I got to the part where Gazumba is the protector of the

natural world, all the animals, and plants, and especially, the trees. At this point, Sidney looked at me wide-eyed and asked what would happen to someone who hurt something Gazumba protected. (I didn't know it was Sidney who had peeled all the bark off a pine in Juniors.) I replied that Gazumba was a kind spirit, and didn't believe in hurting people, but might come to that person as a voice in their head, letting them know that what they were doing was wrong, and they shouldn't do it anymore.

When we got to the brushpile, thunder was cracking all around us. "Maybe that's Gazumba talking to us," I suggested. "How can we talk to him?" asked Sidney. "In our thoughts?"

The rest of the morning, Sidney seemed especially observant of Gazumba's "friends:" letting bugs out of the truck, being careful with the trees...

Saturday, July 30

One of the Juniors picked up an empty orange juice container in arts and crafts today to use as a mold, when he noticed a praying mantis on it. A few other kids came over to see. "That's neat!" "Does it bite?" "Does it change colors?" Charlie, a Youthie, thought to put it on a burdock plant right outside the old sliding barn door. A few stayed to watch it, when a bee happened to land on the plant. We watched silently as it stalked the bee. Minutes passed while the praying mantis remained absolutely motionless, and the bee buzzed around unaware. When it finally got into position and struck, the ones watching called to the rest in the shop. I couldn't believe it! Everyone interrupted their pottery work and crowded to the barn doorway. "Hey, the bee's still twitching!" "You can hear it crunching!" "He's a wonder of nature!" "He's sucking the insides out--look! you can see him chewing!" "It takes him a long time." "That was so cool!" Eleven people--Acorns, Youthies, Juniors, staff, visitors--all shared the experience. Two maintenance staff came by mid-way through the meal and joined in the watch. Some went back to work, others watched longer, still others came out to check on it from time to time.

Three days later, the director passed through the Arts and Crafts shop, and the large, overbearing burdock plant by the side of the door caught his eye. He disappeared

for a few minutes, then came back with a hoe from a nearby shed, walking straight toward the plant. Two Junior boys jumped up from their clay and went after him. "What are you doing?" one yelled, almost desperately. "I'm just going to get rid of this thing. It's in the way," he replied. "You can't do that!" exclaimed the other. "That's where the praying mantis stays now. You'd be destroying his home!" At which point, other kids in the shop, roused by the conflict, joined in--"Leave it alone! Don't cut it down!" In the face of such an uproar, he just picked up his hoe and left.

Thursday, August 4

It was really something visiting Camp S. (a very large YMCA camp) with the four counselors-in-training. We checked out their nature center and found display after display of insects, butterflies, mammals, cage after aquarium of gerbils, snakes, turtles... The reaction of our kids was one of disbelief, and almost horror. That one would think of doing that to animals! What does that say about peoples' relationship to animals? Shows that it's an O.K. think to do? Kill and display? They were shocked when they found out the director had asked for a kill jar in our nature center, and heatedly discussed his speech on "taming back the jungle" of Circle Pines.

One camper from Camp S. walked by us with a snake he'd caught. "Go put it in the nature center," his counselor, our guide, said. Liz, a CIT, lingered behind. "Don't you think he'd really be happier back where you found him? Think of the snake--How would you feel if someone picked you up and walked off with you? and wouldn't let you go? You wouldn't like it very much, I'll bet."

By contrast with Camp S., they also noticed the ruggedness, "roughing-it" atmosphere of Circle Pines. By this, they meant the lack of pruning, landscaping, upkeep --letting nature have her way--and they seemed to prefer this.

They asked if the Indian theme was carried on with authenticity or in a stereotypic view. A little of both,

Gloria answered. Still the war paints and paper bag costumes, but their outdoor education program had researched Indian life, and they did some cooking and crafts. At this point, Kris, a CIT, told her of our rituals--the ritual of healing and one of the land--where we called on the powers of the four directions, and sang to the spirit of the land. It was the spirit and wisdom of the Native American that we wanted to find again, not necessarily his material ways, and it was through his rituals that we sought to rediscover our connections with the earth.

It had been a mind-opening experience for the girls, and for me, too. It had been awhile since I had been in a more traditional camp setting, and I had tended to assume that they were growing and changing along the same lines I was. The reality of the fundamental difference between our underlying beliefs and assumptions really hit home that afternoon. And I hadn't realized how much the CITs had internalized from the summer at Circle Pines and their past experiences until I heard them talking to staff and campers at Camp S.

Friday, August 5

A cicada and a wasp fell, fighting, out of a tree today, with a whole picnic table full of Youthies close by. They all came running over to see what it was, and watched the struggle between the two, until the wasp finally dragged its multi-stung prey up a nearby tree.

And to think these kids would never put foot inside the nature center...

It was also a time for another night hike with the Acorns. Four boys went who were amazed

- at all the stars
- at airplanes that flew at night
- at the Milky Way
- at a world without colors

At about this point in the summer, I came to realize that some of my frustration resulted from "nature" just being a part of a whole, total program at Circle Pines. It was an important part, the directors had assured me, but I realized that in the past, I had worked mainly in outdoor education centers where it was the key element. The raison d'être was to teach the children about the natural world. Somehow I had expected the same level of intensity and involvement on the part of the Circle Pines' staff and campers, and couldn't figure out what I was doing wrong when it just didn't happen. With this dawning, that I couldn't expect "nature" to have the same top priority in the camp as a whole, I breathed a lot easier. And, at the same time, I turned right around and planned an activity that was bound to get some attention: a trip to the nearby cemetery.

Monday, August 8

It was great! Almost as many adults went as kids, and although we packed the station wagon tight, we didn't have enough room for all who wanted to go. "But how does a cemetery relate to nature?" and "What do you do there?" I knew these questions would come up, they always do, but this time, I thought, let's just wait and see if they can't figure them out by themselves. And they did. I didn't have to direct one person in what to look for or learn once we got there; they all found something particularly interesting to them. Some looked at the shapes and designs of the stones, others found names that were familiar to them, still others looked for epitaphs. And discussions and sharings went all around. We talked of burial customs, the land 100 years ago, the people who might have lived then, death, and...nature.

Saturday, August 13

The campers leave today and I'm wondering--What was the summer like for them? How did nature enter into

their lives? In what ways have they grown since the first day of camp?

I had the chance to ask some of the older campers and staff, and here are some of the replies I got.

> This summer I found myself more in touch with the earth, checking the dew and the wind every morning to see if it's going to rain. I think I worked more with it, than against it. If it rained I accepted it and worked around it. I feel so spiritual now, not religious... It bothered me when I saw kids being violent toward nature.
>
> (B.A.)

> I feel more in tune with myself because of the nature here. Life is all around. I have much more respect for nature. I feel that it should go before me and my discomfort. It is so much more powerful than me...

> You know, it made me so mad when that camper stripped all the bark from that tree. I told him how harmful that was to the tree, and with a counselor, I found out that cutting it down was the best thing for it. So I got a two-person saw and we cut it down together. Meanwhile I was telling him how it made me feel to destroy a life for no reason. This session I made a rule during contracting (with the Juniors) to be good to nature and respect it so as to prevent this from happening again.
>
> (K.J.)

> I found it's not as easy to survive in nature as I'd thought. I have a new respect for life, for the trees and animals. It's not easy for them, in wind and heat...

> Night time in the city is a time for closing the self off, for being defensive and wary. Here at Circle Pines, it is a time to be open, to be aware of nature and how you're a part of nature. It's opening yourself to the stars, the moon, moon shadows, shapes of trees. You don't see trees and sky, you know, you see shapes. The artistic side of you comes out. I learned to let go of my fears of night time.

> Nature is a way to explain yourself to others. There are so many signs and symbols and metaphors.

> In nature, you can appreciate the moment more. You're not headed for any destination. You can appreciate the simple things: the wind that keeps the bugs away, water to wash with, your self for getting there. When you're not protected from nature, everything affects you more.
>
> (S.K.)

One of my hopes for the summer was that the adults would feel free to become "childlike" in front of nature, that they would become explorers, awe-struck investigators, that they could let go of some long-held expectations of mastering nature, of reducing her to manageable rules and names. I hoped that my approach as naturist, as someone who doesn't know all the answers, maybe isn't even seeking all the answers, and just enjoying what is, would allow them to give themselves that freedom.

Monday, August 15

> Here it is--the summer is technically over. I should be in staff debriefing--but I volunteered to help out with Youth Institute and lead a work project. I know I can't finish it, what with only three days with the kids, but I've just got to do it. I want to get the nature trail started.

Wednesday, August 17

> For some reason, it was just the thing to do. I had cleared the trail earlier in the summer with a group of Youthies and Juniors. And what remained was the creating of the signs and putting them out. This was a major undertaking. The nature trail was one of my biggest hopes for the summer, one of the last I gave up as the summer drew to a close. I had been thinking about nature trails for quite a while, much along the same lines I'd been thinking about naturalists. I had been on quite a few nature trails, and many of them wound through some truly beautiful land. But I always left with the same bad taste in my mouth--here was something someone thought I should see and on their signs were things they thought I should know. I was to look only, not touch, and heaven

forbid, never leave the trail!

So I began to dream. What sort of trail could it be at Circle Pines? I wanted it to be necessary to move <u>through</u> nature--not as a mere spectator, detached, as if viewing at a zoo or walking through a well-kept park. I wanted them to feel a part of nature. For that reason the trail was distinguishable, but not to the point of blatancy. Not everything in a 4-foot span was cleared. At times, you'd have to step around a tree or sapling, or over a fallen log, or under a low-hanging branch. Not only does this necessitate a little participation on the part of the walker, but also follows the underlying belief that our total convenience here on Earth is not the utmost priority. Nature has a right to continue her ways on her own.

As for signs, several themes popped into my head, but my last thinking was towards a holistic sort of nature trail, encompassing ecological, factual, local historical, inspirational, sensory, and political aspects. I talked this over with the 7 or 8 youth who were interested, painted my picture, as it were, and told them of some of the more specific ideas I'd had for signs. We then walked the trail to get a feel for it. I was amazed at how intensely involved they became in the project. They seemed even more excited about it than I was. Some spent hours carefully lettering and beautifully illustrating each sign. Others worked at cutting the 7 foot posts and attaching the signs and later went out to dig the holes and sink the posts. The signs were incredible--like no nature trail I've ever seen before--each one an individual piece of artwork, with an invitation to sit down and relax, to learn about the energy flow, to reflect on a quote of one who had thought before, or contemplate a poem of one of the staff. There were technical setbacks and severe time limits. Yet the wonder of it all is that it became <u>their</u> project. It was something they understood, believed in, and wanted to express. And they will. Many of these youth have been coming to Circle Pines since they were Acorns, and are now active members of the Circle Pines cooperative. They are the future staff and directors. They will give Circle Pines its force and direction in the years to come, and their concern and convictions will touch other people. I found a strong, new attitude in the words of their jointly-written philosophy of the nature trail.

> . . . if Circle Pines is truly sincere in its cooperative philosophy, this must also be extended to the Land. As Aldo Leopold said, "a land ethic changes the role of Homosapiens from conqueror of

> the land community to plain member and citizen of it. It implies respect for his fellow-members, and also respect for the community as such." We pride ourselves on practicing non-violence, on not tolerating put-downs or any form of subordination or control over others, especially of sexist or racist nature. Our cultural arrogance toward the Earth may be the last to die.
>
> It may not have occurred to us to grant the Land the same rights as the people who inhabit it.

And work on the nature trail continues. Through apple cider weekend. Through winter camp. Maybe through next summer. Hopefully longer than that. Hopefully it will always show the mark of those who call Circle Pines home.

Looking back on the summer as a whole, I remember the internal frustration

- of trying to be a naturalist in my own way
- of trying to fit into the structure already outlined for the summer
- of expecting more involvement and interest, and realizing that nature is just part of a whole.

But more than that, I remember watching people observing, noticing, caring, slowing down, and looking around. I remember the eyes of the Acorns as the full moon shone on the lake and in their faces, the intense discussion with Libby and Liz as we cleared the land we'd been told to, and the fervor in which the Youth adopted the nature trail as their own. And it makes me wonder. Where do these feelings that we share come from? From a deep sense of connection with the Earth? From the life force flowing through us? From wherever, no matter, I am thankful for them, for they bring wonder and beauty, mystery and hope to this world.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

This essay ends only in the sense that paper and pen have been laid aside...for now. Prior to this understanding, I kept hoping that each new experience, new position, new community would reveal the conclusion to what's gone before, would tie all the separate pieces up nicely. But instead, I've found that rather than concluding, i.e., condensing, narrowing, finalizing, tightening, bringing to a close, that the way of my thoughts has been towards expanding, connecting, building on and growing from.

I don't feel at all ready to conclude. This essay, and the experiences that brought it forth have answered some questions, but opened so many more areas to my mind. It's having a heyday trying to choose which area to explore next, and usually ends up in all of them at the same time. And with each bit of new understanding, I realize that what I thought was a small rain puddle is really a deep lake is really the powerful ocean is really...

As I sit here, searching for words to express my difficulty in ending this, I am struck with the thought that perhaps it is because it goes against that which is Nature. In nature, everything is connected to something else. Each experience I have enables me to better understand those in

the past, and propels me towards those in the future. I find the more I come to understand, the more connections, or bridges, I see, and from each connection, there's an exciting new land to explore with lots more bridges. As for ending this essay, as in Nature, things don't end. They are transformed. Even in death, or completion, they provide the material from which new life, new thoughts in others, may grow. And the cycle goes round.

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